SAT. SPECIAL / D1 **Why Jan Nieto has XYZ factor**

METRO / A17 **Court battle looms between DPWH, Makati gov't over electronic billboard**

SPORTS / A23 **Filipinos rule world pool, says Billiards Digest**

BUSINESS / B1 **OFW remittances hit all-time high of $14B in 2006**

WORLD / A20 **Bush authorizes killing Iranians in Iraq**

HK maids to hold protest rally over new restrictions

By Daisy C. L. Mundap
Contributor

HONG KONG—ASSOCIATIONS OF FILIPINO workers here are gathering their forces for a big rally in front of the Philippine Embassy in Central district on Sunday to protest new overseas employment regulations which they say will only lead to loss of jobs for a big number of domestic helpers.

FOR PHOTOS, A6

PHILIPPINE DAILY
INQUIRER
BALANCED NEWS, FEARLESS VIEWS

Saturday, January 27, 2007 ★★ 5 sections / Vol. 22 / No. 58 P18 www.inquirer.net

Abalos: Computerization of poll still impossible

By Jerome Aning and TJ Burgonio

"OPERATIONALLY IMPOSSIBLE TO IMPLEment," a defiant Commission on Elections Chair Benjamin Abalos Sr. said yesterday of the proposed poll automation in selected areas during the May elections.

"I'd rather go to jail than be forced to implement

ABALOS ON, A6

'Team Unity' shaping up

Atong deal kept secret for security reasons

By Norman Bordadora

SPECIAL PROSECUTOR DENNIS Villa-Ignacio yesterday said it was important for government prosecutors and the lawyers of Charlie "Atong" Ang to keep their plea bargain agreement under wraps until it was presented to the Sandiganbayan.

Reacting to the complaint on Thursday of Rene Saguisag, deposed President Joseph Estrada's lead counsel in his plunder case, that the defense team was not even provided a copy of the proposed deal, Villa-Ignacio said there was a strict agreement of confidentiality regarding the matter.

"There were security considerations," he told the Inquirer.

The proposed deal would have Ang implicating Estrada, his principal co-accused and former gambling buddy, in exchange for being allowed to plead guilty to corruption of a public official and evade a trial for plunder.

Villa-Ignacio said there was no treachery on the part of the prosecutors in the plunder case as well as Ang's lawyers because copies of the plea bargain agreement became readily available to Estrada's lawyers after it was submitted to the Sandiganbayan for disposition.

"As [Associate Justice Francisco Villaruz] said, the defense can readily get a copy of the deal because upon its sub-

ATONG, A6

ON ARRIVAL at the congress venue in Davos, Switzerland, President Arroyo is escorted by Hans Schwab (left) director of Sirpa, the leading provider of security links and solutions for most of the world's bank execs. He's also the nephew of World Economic Forum founding chair Klaus Schwab.

GMA bats for Asean as major trading bloc

By Tina Arceo-Dumlao

DAVOS, SWITZERLAND (via PLDT)—The Association of Southeast Asian Nations (Asean) is ready to take its place among the world's major trading blocs as its members forge stronger political, economic and security ties.

"It is time for Asia to stand up and be counted," President Macapagal-Arroyo said in discussions she held yesterday on the theme of "Asean's Economic Roadmap" with some 80 representatives of major international financial players and multilateral lending agencies at the World Economic Forum in this Swiss ski resort.

"At a time of uncertainty in the world, I am proud that Asean is taking a bold step forward rather than a timid step back by committing to establish an Asean charter," said Ms Arroyo, who spoke for the 10-nation grouping which is chaired this year by the Philippines.

In its 12th Summit of Leaders held in Cebu earlier this month, Asean leaders agreed to draw up a charter, the first ever for a group that in the past acted on informal consensus. The charter will provide an institutional framework for the further expansion of trade and create a formidable trading bloc.

The economic roadmap will end with the formation of a single market and production base with free movement of goods, services, skilled labor and investments.

GMA BATS, A9

Opposition bets likely in GMA Senate list

By Gil C. Cabacungan Jr., Christine O. Avendaño and Michael Lim Ubac

WITH THE OPPOSITION cracking apart, President Macapagal-Arroyo is moving to gain the upper hand in the May elections by forming a "unity ticket" that would take in reelectionists, senators making a comeback and young guns, amid warnings from loyal allies against "Trojan horses."

Presidential Chief of Staff Michael Defensor said yesterday he believed that whatever wounds had been inflicted on Ms Arroyo by former opposition Senators Vicente Sotto III and Tomas Aquino-Oreta "were not deep enough to prevent a reconciliation."

Defensor told the Inquirer the administration slate was likely to be loaded by reelectionist Senators Joker Arroyo and Ralph Recto, the comebacking Sotto and Oreta, and the young guns of the historic 11th Congress (which voted to impeach President Joseph Estrada), like Taguig Rep. Gilberto Teodoro, Bukidnon Rep. Miguel Zubiri and he (Defensor) himself.

Defensor said that Sotto and Oreta were opportunists with moderate or centrist views compared to "the other faces in the opposition."

He said their inclusion in an administration slate would be a big step toward reconciliation.

A top Malacañang official, who requested anonymity, said the administration coalition—Lakas-CMD, Kampi and NPC—had even adopted a tentative campaign slogan, "Team Unity: Tulong-Tulong Sa Pag-Sulong," which reflected the direction Ms Arroyo was tak-

TEAM UNITY, A4

Bright lights, live bands now perk up nights in Jolo

JOLO, SULU—A FEW YEARS ago, what Nonaida and her high school friends do would be unthinkable—going out at night in this capital town, the bastion of the extremist group Abu Sayyaf.

Now, the provincial capitol building is flooded with green, blue, yellow and red lights each night. Scores of people visit its grounds, which have been transformed into a park.

"We are having fun here every night. This has become a favorite hangout for teenagers," Nonaida said as she shared some chicken with three friends at an open-air restaurant near the capitol grounds.

There was little to differentiate the 17-year-old from any other teenager in the Philippines—she was wearing jeans and a T-shirt and giggled incessantly while talking.

"We couldn't go out late at night before because of the curfew, but things have started to change since the US soldiers started arriving," she said.

Abu Sayyaf fighters, who have taken refuge in the Muslim-dominated island of Jolo for years, have been pushed back into the hills since US troops arrived in 2002 to help train their Philippine counterparts and provide intelligence.

Since then, the situation in Jolo has improved hugely; residents say A night curfew has been lifted and there is a buzz as commerce flourishes and fear dissipates.

BRIGHT LIGHTS, A6

Quarrelsome star bangs over pols in year of the pig

By Nikko Dizon

IN THE YEAR OF THE FIRE pig, it will not rain ladies.

But there is a quarrelsome star in the horizon and participants—commonly known as politicians and leaders of the world—will be affected, according to feng shui master, Lillian Too.

"This year, all men, especially those in patriarchal positions, will be affected by the quarrelsome star. They will be caught in misunderstandings," said Too in a brief arrival press conference yesterday at the Ninoy Aquino International Airport (Naia).

QUARRELSOME, A6

Inquirer, GMA 7, PLDT link up for polls

By Riza T. Olchondra

MINDFUL THAT THIS YEAR'S elections may very well be a referendum on the current administration, the top media and telecommunication companies have joined forces for the most comprehensive coverage of "Eleksyon 2007."

The eight partners, namely the Philippine Daily Inquirer (PDI), GMA Network Inc., Philippine Center for Investigative Journalism (PCIJ), Newsbreak, Catholic Media Network (CMN), Philippine Long Distance Telephone Co. (PLDT), Smart Communications Inc. and ABS-CBN Interactive, will use the latest innovations in media, telecommunications and technology in this year's poll coverage.

"We will have a dedicated team

PDI, GMA 7, A3

ALL FOR ONE: Executives of top media and telecom firms seal their union for election coverage with the signing of a MOA and posing for a souvenir. (At left) Sandy P. Romualdez, PDI president; Manny Pangilinan (2nd from left), chair of the board PLDT and Smart; Felipe Gozon (center), president/CEO GMA Network Inc.

PCSO
FOUR-DIGIT
2 5 | 6 9 0 7
Last Two SUERTRES
8 5 7 | 7 9 7
MEGALOTTO 6/45
3 6 9 11 13 22
₱52,870,897.80

Second FRONTPAGE

E-mail: pi_news@inquirer.com.ph Website: www.inquirer.net/online
Text us your headlines: inquirer news <space> <message> to 2317 (Globe) or 581 (Smart)

WEATHER FORECAST

FORECAST: Northern and Eastern Luzon will experience mostly cloudy skies with occasional rain, while Metro Manila and the rest of the country will experience partly cloudy skies. The rest of the country will be mostly partly cloudy with isolated rainshowers or thunderstorms.

Metro Manila	Partly cloudy	Cebu/Bacolod	Partly cloudy
Baguio	Partly cloudy	Davao	Partly cloudy
Tuguegarao	Partly cloudy	Cotabato	Partly cloudy
Laoag	Partly cloudy	Zamboanga	Partly cloudy
Clark/Tarlac	Partly cloudy	Iloilo	Cloudy with rain
Legazpi	Partly cloudy	Tacloban	Cloudy with rain
Puerto Princesa	Partly cloudy	Surigao	Cloudy with rain

Sino poachers not off the hook

Presidential daughter is monitoring the case

By Armando N. Nocum

IF JUSTICE SECRETARY RAUL GONZALEZ WAS thinking of dropping a case against Chinese poachers caught off Palawan, a call from President Macapagal-Arroyo's daughter, Luli, has apparently helped change his mind.

Gonzalez yesterday assured environmental conservation advocates that the Department of Justice was now going to pursue charges against 30 Chinese nationals reportedly caught poaching last December in the Tubbataha Reef Marine Park, which hosts one of the most diverse marine life in the world.

Earlier this week, the justice secretary received a barrage of criticism for releasing another group of Chinese poachers caught off nearby Mangsee Island, in Balabac, Palawan, last October.

In a telephone interview, Gonzalez admitted that even the President's daughter, Luli Arroyo, is monitoring the new case closely, and is not happy about the poachers being allowed to go scot-free.

"Luli is following it up ... galit si Luli dyan (Luli is angry at the Chinese poachers)," Gonzalez said.

Gonzalez said there was no truth to reports that the DOJ was about to drop the case against the Tubbataha poachers, because of pressure from Chinese officials.

"We will not grant it [the dropping of charges against the poachers]," he said.

Yesterday, the lawyer of the 30 Chinese caught in Tubbataha Reef asked the DOJ to reverse the resolution of the Palawan provincial prosecutor endorsing the filing of criminal charges against the crewmen of the Hui Wen, saying they were victims of arbitrary detention. He said this made the evidence against them inadmissible.

"If this kind of evidence is admitted, it will encourage abuses among law enforcers," argued lawyer Daniel Fe.

But in a resolution dated Jan. 12, 2006, provincial prosecutor Alex Ivan Rodriguez held that there was prima facie evidence that the 30 crewmembers of the Hui Wen were poaching in Philippine waters, making the arrest valid. Marine rangers reported that the ship was loaded with live fish species.

The prosecutor also said the delay in bringing the respondents to Puerto Princesa for an inquest was justified since it was due to bad weather.

The provincial prosecutor recommended the filing of criminal charges against the crewmen before the trial court for taking of rare, threatened or endangered species in violation of RA 8550, or the Fisheries Code, and of RA 9147, or the Wildlife Resources Conservation and Protection Act.

The accused poachers have been temporarily released from jail after posting bail.

Meanwhile, Sen. Jamby Madrigal noted that around 900 foreigners, most of them Chinese, have been arrested for poaching in waters off Palawan alone and almost all of them have escaped prosecution by leaving the country after posting bail.

Only 17 Chinese fishermen, she recalled, were convicted of poaching in 2004.

Sen. Pia Cayetano, chair of the Senate committee on the environment, has expressed strong disapproval over release of the Mangsee Island poachers. She urged law enforcers in the Senate to unconditionally pass a bill declaring the Tubbataha Reef a national park and imposing stronger penalties against poachers.

GONZALEZ

LULI ARROYO

Wage increase must not exceed 5 percent, says BSP

By Michaelle V. Ninoy

THE BANGKO SENTRAL NG PILIPINAS yesterday said the increase in the minimum wage should be limited to only five percent to prevent consumer prices from increasing beyond target levels.

Diwa Guinigundo said the BSP, which is tasked to help ensure price stability, has set an inflation rate target of between four to five percent for 2007.

If, like all core five persons in the minimum wage would cause inflation, or the increase in consumer prices, to breach the target, he warned.

Minimum wage earners are those whose monthly income is P5,000 or below, or whose annual income does not exceed P60,000. Minimum wage earners are also those whose daily pay is P225 or below.

Guinigundo explained that an increase in the minimum wage would accelerate inflation because it would encourage the public to spend more. Higher demand for goods and services, in turn, will lead to an increase in prices.

Guinigundo said that based on latest data available, the BSP expected annual inflation for 2007 to settle closer at the lower end of the four to five percent target range.

He said an inflation close to four percent was possible for this year because of the strengthening of the peso and the softening of prices in the world market. A stronger peso makes the cost of imported goods cheaper.

But he said inflation would breach the high-end of the target if a wage hike of more than five percent would be implemented.

Using a P225 daily wage as a guide, this means that the minimum wage should only be increased by P16.25, or to only P241.25, to keep inflation within target levels.

Labor groups have sought a P125 across-the-board increase in the current minimum wages.

Guinigundo said a wage hike was one of the risks to the inflation target that was strongly being monitored by the BSP in the months of to come. Story policy 66 noted though that the risk had somehow diminished following recent pronouncements from authorities opposing the proposed wage hike.

The House of Representatives and the Senate previously adopted the bill seeking a P125 hike in the minimum wages of workers.

Officials from the executive boards, however, resisted against the adverse effect of such increase on the health of the economy.

Ronaldo Iloro, director general of the National Economic and Development Authority (Neda), said an across-the-board increase in wages would hurt small businesses that could not afford such an increase.

He said varying capacities of firms should be taken into account in deciding respective amounts of wage hike that would be implemented.

THE EL NIDO Marine Reserve in Bacuit Bay, Palawan, is named as one of the most beautiful places on Earth.

El Nido one of 12 finalists in Tourism for Tomorrow tilt

FOR ITS "ENVIRONMENTAL responsibility and commitment to local people," El Nido Resorts in Palawan was named one of 12 finalists in the Tourism for Tomorrow Awards 2007, showcasing the world's best in travel and tourism development.

Gordon Christ, judging chair of the awards and an internationally recognized expert in sustainable tourism said: "With rigorous evaluation standards and detailed criteria, the Tourism for Tomorrow Awards have become the 'Oscars' of the travel and tourism industry."

"Today that means not only providing an outstanding tourism product but doing so in a way that helps to protect the cultural and natural heritage of our planet," he added.

El Nido Resorts, operated by El Nido Development Corp., is a finalist in the category "Tourism in People Around."

It was cited for its "comprehensive approach to fair wages, capacity building and staff education [which] showcases true investment in people. El Nido Development Corporation not only complies with the principles of triple bottom line sustainable management, environment, culture and economic benefits, but also helps promote sustainable tourism practices on the Philippine island of Palawan."

An international committee of experts reviewed the 12 finalists from over 130 applications from more than 60 countries.

Winners will be announced on May 11 in Lisbon, Portugal.

The other finalists are:

• Destination award—Great Barrier Reef, Australia; Greenbox Trading for Responsible Tourism, Ireland; the State of Vermont, United States.

• Conservation award—Aqua-Tech, Fiji Islands; Aspen Skiing Company, United States; Cazorla Ecological Refuge, Award

• Investor in people award—3R Green Development Corporation/El Nido Resorts, Philippines; Mitsubara Resort, Indonesia; Sundarbans Jungle Camp, India

• Global tourism business award—Lindblad Expeditions, United States; Six Senses Reserve & Spa, Thailand; Wilderness Safaris, South Africa

Abu hunt harder now, says general

By Dona Pazzibugan

ALTHOUGH FLUSH WITH SUCCESS, THE military will not find it easy to go after the remaining leaders and members of the terrorist Abu Sayyaf, according to a top ground commander in Sulu.

Brig. Gen. Ruben Rafael, commander of the Sulu-based counterterrorist Task Force Comet, yesterday said that since the killing of Abu Sayyaf chieftain Khadaffy Janjalani and other leaders, the bandits had broken up into small groups to avoid further encounters with the military.

"They are always on the move, which makes it more difficult to track them down. How are we going to deal with that?" Rafael told reporters at the Camp Aguinaldo military headquarters in Quezon City.

Rafael said the cabecillas had also withdrawn from skirmishes with government troops.

"If they can avoid it, they will avoid it," he said. "They go in separate groups and then they regroup. That's their tactic. They regroup and plan, but definitely they keep to small groups."

Last Aug. 1, the military resumed pursuit operations against the Abu Sayyaf, which is responsible for several high-profile kidnappings and deadly bomb attacks in recent years.

Rafael said some of the troops who took part in the neutralization of Janjalani, Jainal Antel Sali alias Abu Solaiman, and other Abu Sayyaf leaders flew to Manila from Sulu earlier this week to receive plaques of recognition and incentives from President Macapagal-Arroyo in Malacañang.

Mr Arroyo declared that with the top Abu Sayyaf leaders gone, the troops would now go after the "tops."

Asked if the next series of operations would be similarly easier, Rafael said: "Nothing is easy in a soldier's life.

"Whether it's the final battle or not, it's always difficult. So when you plan, you should always expect the worst thing that will happen. But our soldiers' morale is high, especially now that our cauldrons are paying off."

Troops are going after the Abu Sayyaf's remaining identified leaders led by Radullan Sahiron and Isnilon Hapilon, considered the group's "commander in chief."

Sahiron, in his 70s, is a veteran secessionist fighter who is said to command a big following in Sulu.

According to Rafael, Sahiron is still in Sulu with Omar Opek and Dalmanie, two wanted members of the regional terror group Jemaah Islamiyah (JI) who allegedly masterminded the 2002 bomb attacks in Bali, Indonesia.

As for Hapilon, military officials said there were reports that he had slipped back to his base in Basilan.

Military verifying report on Dulmatin

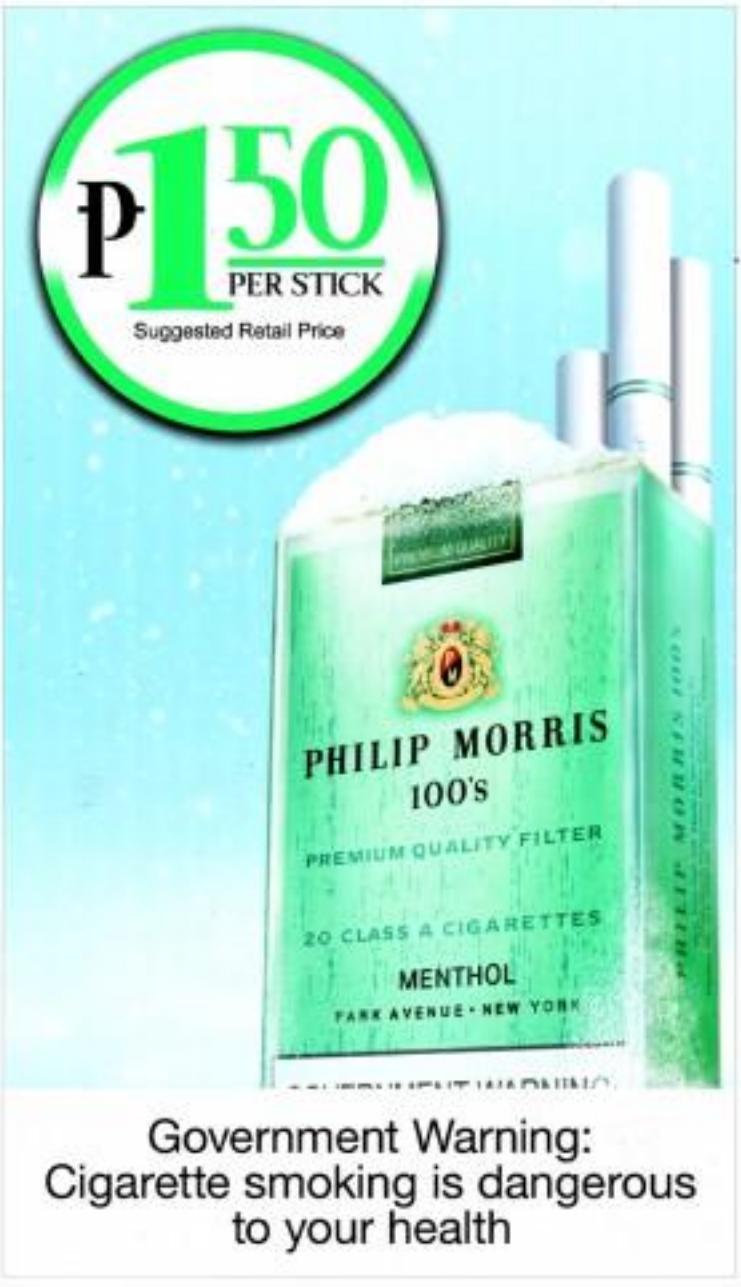
DAVAO CITY—REPORTS THAT Indonesian terror suspect Dulmatin might have been wounded in the clash that led to the death of Abu Sayyaf senior leader Abu Sulaiman are still being verified, ranking military officials said yesterday.

Maj. Eugene Batara, spokesperson of the Western Mindanao Command (Westmincom), expressed surprise at TV reports that Dulmatin had been injured.

"We have been very careful in issuing reports," he said. "The truth is, we don't have solid information of Dulmatin getting injured in the operation."

Batara said Lt. Gen. Eugenio Cedo, Westmincom chief, was communicating with intelligence units to verify the information attributed to Lt. Aldemarie Miljares of the Army's 8th Special Forces Company.

Brig. Gen. Eugenio Bitonio, commanding general of the Joint Special Operations Force, said he had been informed of the possibility that Dulmatin was injured in the clash. But Dulmatin, who has been cited as one Miljares' wanted leaders in Mindanao's hinterlands, could be killed or captured, he said there was no confirmation. Julie S. Alipala, Inquirer Mindanao



RP polls still flawed, says CBCP president

By Lila B. Salaverria

THE HEAD OF THE INFLUENTIAL Catholic Bishops Conference of the Philippines yesterday said the Commission on Elections has apparently still failed to live up to its mandate of ensuring clean, honest and peaceful elections.

According to CBCP president and Davao Archbishop Angel Lagdameo, the country's elections are still flawed, and the presence of citizen and church groups that keep tab on the electoral process speaks of this fact.

Lagdameo said the ideal election was one without the need for such watchdog.

"The [COC], Namfrel, Nassa Bantayan mobilized in order to cure the inoperativeness of our electoral process," Lagdameo told reporters.

"Kasi ang pinanawagan nung una ay dapat [the Comelec should be an instrument of peaceful, honest elections. Di parang nung unang panahon hindi naman nahaliya at sigaw-sigaw dang ito, na these groups continue to respond in this sense: 'The earlier expectation was that the Comelec should be an instrument of peaceful, honest elections. But was not seen in the past, and maybe even up to now, so these groups continue to respond to this need'," the CBCP head said.

PPCRV Kanlaon (or Parish Pastoral Council for Responsible Voting), Namfrel for National Citizens' Movement for Free Elections, Nassa Bantay for National Secretariat for Social Action, Justice and Peace, Nassa is the social action arm of the CBCP. These groups act as poll watchers during elections and even conduct voters' education programs.

Namfrel also has a republic count.

Lagdameo said the Comelec apparently welcomed the PPCRV.

The Comelec approved Friday the accreditation of PPCRV as its citizens' arm in the May 2007 elections. (Get related story)

Catholic bishops led by Lagdameo met with PPCRV representatives the other day to discuss the latter's actions in the pullouts' absence. He said most of the directors' social action directors are members of the PPCRV. Most of the group's members come from parishes.

Valera returns to a divided Abra

By Leonardo Ballaro Jr. and Vincent Cabreza
Inquirer Northern Luzon

VALERA

BANGUED, ABRA—AFTER HIS arrest and detention in Quezon City last month, Abra Gov. Vicente Valera arrived here Thursday night and was greeted by supporters either proclaiming his innocence or blaming him for the Dec. 30 assassination of Abra Rep. Luis Bersamin Jr.

The government claimed that Bersamin's murder had chiefly divided the province.

One prisoner made "Hostage Negotiator Gubernador nosara ti panchakpagayo ni Congressman Agbing ita Sunday! Rasta ita nga diwata. Negotiate ka! Inchot-negotiate ka! Bagam laeo ti nagapuso (Duchy has confessed! The governor is innocent of the killing of the congressman. Long live Feb. days! You are a true Ifuntilo. They tortured and threatened you, but you still told the truth)."

It was referring to former Army M/Sgt. Rufino Pinday, one of the prime suspects in Bersamin's murder, who recanted his earlier statements identifying Valera as the mastermind of the assassination.

But other prisoners were less forgiving. "Ngayon t April o patay (Until plus story again death)," Justice for Congressman Bersamin and SPO1 Adolfo Ortega."

"This is again a challenge for me to double and triple my efforts to continue serving the people of Abra," Valera told reporters here.

This was Valera's first public appearance since Pinday identified him as the man who hired Bersamin's killers. Pinday's testimony helped the police build up a case against Valera.

Senior circuitwork have praised Pinday for coming forward. His allegations. Others said Valera had been framed by Bersamin's murder.

Valera was arrested and detained on charges of illegal possession of firearms and for a traffic violation in Quezon City on Dec. 29. He has not been charged for the Bersamin murder. He was released on Jan. 3 after posting bail.

He faces another illegal firearm charge filed by the police's Criminal Investigation and Detection Group (CIDG) in the Cordilleras.

He was not arrested, however, because Abra prosecutors have yet to issue a subpoena to start Abra's preliminary investigation, said Senior Supt. Rolando Asuncion, CIDG-Cordillera director.

CIDG men confiscated an undersized automatic rifle from Valera's house here last month on the strength of a warrant issued by a Quezon City judge. Valera was not in his house when it was raided.

On his way to Abra, Valera was arrested by about 30 vehicles (16 convoy cause from the Laoag International Airport in Ilocos Norte.

Eleonor Magbalaya, director of the Department of the Interior and Local Government in Mtra, and Valera had invited the province's 27 mayors to a meeting on Thursday.

But reports said only more than 10 mayors attended the meeting.

Valera later told reporters that he had been a victim of "pure and simple harassment."

He assailed the serving up of police checkpoints around Bangued, the capital town, as part of security measures ordered by the day-before police and the Task force Abra to Arrest Valera after Bersamin's murder.

One of the checkpoints is located near Valera's house.

Senior Supt. Eugene Martin, chief of Task Force Abra, said the checkpoints among Valera's home are set up to secure the town, and check armed men traveling in and out of the capital town.

"If you do not have something to hide, why not just abide (by the) rules?" he said.

Martin also said that the Commission on Elections in place Abra under its control, but election officials have yet to act on the request. Armando Velasco, Comelec director in the Cordillera, said election and police officials in Abra should be neutral now. He is to discuss the situation in Abra

Comelec accredits Church poll group for May elections

By Jeremy Joerg

THE COMMISSION ON ELECTIONS APproved yesterday the application of the Parish Pastoral Council for Responsible Voting (PPCRV) to be accredited as its citizens' arm in the May 14 elections but declared its disapproval on the group's proposed parallel vote tabulation or "quick count."

In an en banc resolution promulgated Friday, Comelec granted PPCRV's Nov. 22 petition for accreditation, subject to certain rules imposed by the poll body.

The PPCRV's participation during the past electoral exercises and its commitment to send honest, clean, credible and peaceful elections to help noted, "Comelec en banc said in accreditation penned by Commissioner Resurrection Borra.

Notably opposed the PPCRV's accreditation during a hearing conducted by Comelec last Jan. 16.

In contrast, the accreditation of the National Movement for Free Elections (Namfrel) was opposed yesterday by the election lawyer of the late 2004 presidential candidate and movie actor Fernando Poe Jr.

Lawyer Estelito Mendoza said Namfrel proved to be partial and failed in mandated tasks during the previous elections.

In an 18-page petition, Mendoza called on Comelec to look at Namfrel's "flawed performance and the flagrant violation of its assigned, prescribed and mandated undertakings, duties, obligations and responsibilities" during the May 2004 presidential elections.

Mendoza faulted Namfrel for not observing non-partisanship and impartiality, referring to accusations that it committed bonding and collusion with Comelec in permanently declaring President Macapagal-Arroyo as the victim of the hotly contested 2004 presidential race.

PPCRV was allowed to conduct poll watching functions in precincts, including assistance to voters, and in the canvassing of the votes. It would also assist Comelec in voters' education to local government units.

The poll watchdog, however, was expected to be non-partisan and impartial during election period, to disavow hostages and or influence, to police in order to prevent infiltration by persons or groups seeking to destroy its impartiality and to submit weekly reports to the Comelec.

PPCRV was advised to submit proof of its capability to conduct quick counts and show that its proposed method uses proper count.

The Catholic group earlier held in abeyance its election and PPCRV's request to conduct a quick (parallel) unofficial voter done it does not have any kind would in conducting the same."

RP cautions Nigeria against rescue try

THE PHILIPPINES HAS ASKED NIGERIA TO abandon attempts to rescue 24 Filipinos kidnapped from a ship off Nigeria, fearing such efforts could further endanger their lives, a foreign affairs official said yesterday.

"We want to spot our Filipino seafarers out of harm's way as we appealed to the Nigerian government to forego any operation," said Foreign Undersecretary Esteban Conejos.

"If there are ways to resolve this peacefully, we want to exhaust them," he added saying the government was still against paying any ransom.

Updates from Philippine consulates sent to the Niger Delta had also pinpointed the captives' location to Bitiri, the so-called "Camp No. 5," according to Conejos.

He said 17 of the 24 Filipinos at the camp are safe, and even "enjoying the convenience of having a TV." The other seven captives are being kept on board the cargo vessel.

The 24 Filipinos were seized by gunmen from a Nigerian barge of German-owned cargo ships of the type of the Baco Africa on Sept. last week. Camp No. 5 was believed to be the same hideout where another Filipino worker, Anthony Santos, was held along with eight other foreigners on Feb. 18 last year up to his release 11 days later, the official added.

Conejos said there was still no breakthrough in negotiations with the kidnappers.

The country's ambassador to Abuja, Hamanoga Ginga, has already met with Niger Delta Gov. James Ibori, who assured the Filipino envoy that negotiations for the release were having "good results."

Citing Ginga's report to the home office, Conejos said the Nigerian government has requested Manila to lift the suspension on the deployment of Filipino workers to the oil-rich African state as soon as the crisis is resolved.

President Macapagal-Arroyo ordered a ban on the deployment of Filipino workers to Nigeria in the wake of the kidnapping, the second such hostage crisis involving Filipinos in the region in the past six months.

Nigeria is one of the biggest employers of Filipino workers in Africa, with some 3,900 Filipinos employed there at the end of 2006.

Pelt Contreras and AFP

Aquila Domestic Enterprises
www.domesticaquila.com
HANDHELD 2D DIAGNOSTIC ULTRASOUND SCANNERS...
Battery operated, rechargeable, car chargeable, lightweight.
For vets, go, vets, cows, cattle's
ISO / CE CERTIFIED.

PALMTOP PALMHANDLE
TXT 09175454075
or call (02)524 4440

Coastal Woods
Ligas, Bacoor, Cavite

House & Lot starts at P1,324,733
P11,348/mo.
830-0372 • 871-8318
810-6960 • 872-3941
visit us at: www.coastalwoods.com
Vista Realty Corporation

Naia placed on high alert vs bird flu

By Nikko Dizon

THE MANILA INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT Authority (MIAA) yesterday joined the Ninoy Aquino International Airport (Naia) terminals on heightened alert for possible bird flu cases following the emergence of the deadly avian virus in Asia.

All passengers arriving at the Naia terminals will have to undergo chestnut screening before they are allowed to enter the country, the Miaa said.

The Miaa, in coordination with the health department's Bureau of Quarantine, only until to screen passengers who came from countries with recorded cases of bird flu.

Three thermal cameras are now installed at the Naia 1 while the Naia Commercial International can also temperature-screening.

In a statement, the Miaa said that its medical personnel on duty would make sure that all arriving passengers, including airline crew members, pass through the thermal camera scanner.

"Anyone who will reflect an unusually high body temperature as indicated by the thermal scanner will be checked by the medical staff on-duty," the Miaa said.

The Miaa has also identified a holding area for the aircraft carrying passengers with suspected avian flu cases.

Passengers with high temperature will be brought in an isolation area.

The Miaa said it has also coordinated with the Research Institute for Tropical Medicine (RITM) and the San Lazaro Hospital for admission of passengers with probable bird flu.

For years, a foot bath has also been in place at the arrival concourse areas of the Naia terminals.

The foot bath is a carpet with disinfectant on which all incoming passengers are seen walk to sanitize the soles of their shoes as one of the preventive measures against diseases, such as the "foot and mouth disease."

Greenpeace warns vs entry of nuke waste under JPEPA

THE ENVIRONMENTALIST GROUP GREENpeace yesterday warned that the Japan-Philippines Economic Partnership Agreement or JPEPA, now awaiting Senate ratification, includes dangerous provisions that would encourage the export of Japan's nuclear and radioactive waste into the country.

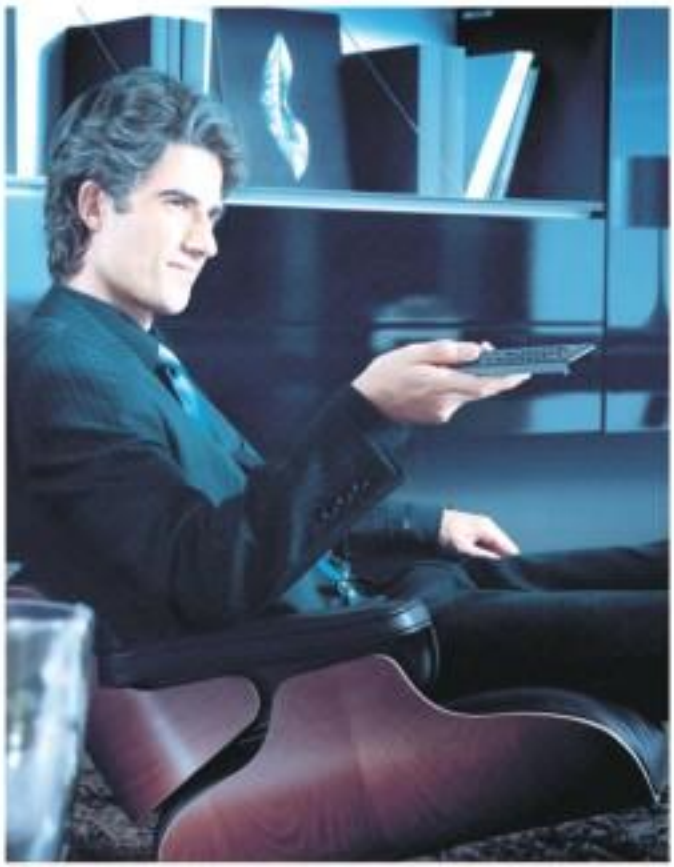
The JPEPA also has provisions which encourage cultural exchanges and "upon [mutual] fuel demands [and] import of nuclear reactors" among others, Jean Cariño, Greenpeace believes the said briefings would include wastes from nuclear reactors.

Despite clear prohibitions against the entry of radioactive waste into the country's borders, there are apprehensions that the treaty once adopted would trump existing laws including Republic Act No. 6969 or the Toxic Substances and Hazardous and Nuclear Wastes Control Act which supposedly guards against such dangerous waste shipments into the country.

"JPEPA proponents will probably argue that there is no intention to trade in nuclear waste between the two countries but for our existing laws will protect us from such shipments. If the intention is not there, then why include these waste provisions in the first place?" said Greenpeace Southeast Asia toxics campaigner Beau Baconguis in a statement.

"By encouraging the trading of radioactive and toxic waste, the agreement only increases the risk that these dangerous materials will end up in our shores one day. The Philippine Senate must not ratify JPEPA unless all nuclear and toxic waste dumping provisions are scrapped," he added.

"It is highly immoral and unjust for a rich country like Japan to dump its dangerous wastes on countries which neither have the means nor resources to manage their own waste problems effectively," Baconguis said.



imagine flawless looks and technology
SAMSUNG
TOLL FREE 1 800 10SAMSUNG

Bright lights, live bands now perk up nights in Jolo

From page A1

"We have live bands, dancing and movie-screening nights on our people can relax," said Governor Benjamin Loong. "We're trying to erase the negative impression of our province as a no-man's land due to the Abu Sayyaf menace."

'Virtually lawless'

In 2000, Abu Sayyaf fighters raided a resort across the Malaysian border and kidnapped 20 people, including Germans, French, Finnish and South African tourists, and brought them to Jolo.

After receiving huge ransoms, the Abu Sayyaf kidnapped another group of tourists, including three Americans, from a resort in Palawan. Two of the Americans were subsequently killed.

Jolo was virtually lawless then, and pitch shots rang out regularly at night. Troops patrolled the streets, but the Abu Sayyaf was known to operate openly in the town.

"Now, you can walk around at night freely and you can observe that many people can now afford to buy a brand-new or second-hand scooter," city official Muhammad Adib told Reuters.

"There's no war here. It's only in the mountains. It's not the enemy to affect us," he said.

The change is pronounced among the young.

"I hate rebels. I hate the Abu Sayyaf," said high school student Sitchana Sahibbin, 15.

Sahibbin was among the students who waved US and Philippine paper flags after American officials led by US Undersecretary of State Karen Hughes and US Ambassador Kristie Kenney inaugurated on Thursday a school building with fourteen connected computers in Maimbung town.

"I'm scared and tired of fleeing from my village every time soldiers clashed with the Abu Sayyaf. I wish they would go away and leave us peacefully because I want to become a teacher someday," the 15-year-old said.

OVERWHELMED by a warm welcome from residents of Maimbung, Sulu, first-time visitor Karen Hughes, Undersecretary of State and American envoy Kristie Kenney mingle with schoolchildren and their parents who are beneficiaries of US-funded projects in the province.

Two fears

But not all the people on the island are happy.

"We were OK here before the military came in," said a Muslim priest here who only gave his name as Ombra.

"It's the military that was covering rebels here. Those Americans have no focus. We should not trust them because they may look kind in front of you, but they are the enemies of Islam."

Some residents said it was not safe yet to travel outside Jolo, particularly to areas around Patikul, Talipao and Indanan town because of the presence of heavy militants as well as bandits on the lookout for potential kidnap and robbery victims.

'Lone-of weapons'

The Tausug, who dominate the 600,000 population of the island, are renowned for their love of weapons and their propensity to use them.

But however loong until things were changed.

"I've noticed an air of hope of Jolo has been transformed," he said. "The Tausug are beginning to value their lives more than their guns." Reuters

Quarrelsome star bangs over pols in year of the pig

From page A1

In contrast, women in multiethnic positions have "the magical eight star which will bring them wealth, success and recognition," she added.

"So be very kind of a Pigs, it tends to favor the woman, especially since the year of the pig is also a Yin year," Teo said.

Will this be a lucky year for President Macapagal-Arroyo, who, incidentally was born in the year of the pig?

Getting rich, staying safe

Teo declined to answer but said that she would reveal more today in a blog that is supposed to help "Gaining Rich and Staying Safe in the Year of the Fire Boar 2007" at the Pandan Cinema of the SM Mall of Asia from 2 p.m. to 7 p.m.

The second part of the extravaganza will be held in the encore at the Hotel Pavilion of the Manila Hotel from 2 p.m. to 7 p.m.

Teo said that in Feng shui, one's personal chart—guided by the year one was born—was always consulted.

Asked if she had any forecast for the Philippines, which is now facing an election year, Teo simply answered that the politicians who are affected by the quarrelsome star "there is a tendency to find fault and play dirty."

"Besides should not be so quarrelsome. They should walk away from a fight. Because when they fight, they will lose. Patience is the key," she added.

On a bright note, she said the Philippines was located in South East Asia, an area which enjoys "winning luck."

Economy good

"The economy will be good and there is very good potential on estate wealth... You will see a lot of economic and commercial action. There's a lot of good luck in this area. It affects the Philippines and other countries in the Asean [Association of Southeast Asian Nations]. I am happy that I like some [here, here]," said Teo, who is billionaire.

Industry groups that deal mainly with metal and earth will do very well this year, she added.

The year of the boar officially starts on Feb. 18. Gu Chi-meng New Year. It is the last of the 12-year animal cycle.

"In it circle quite an exciting time for us. I think we are look forward to a good year ahead. Natural disasters, I think, will continue but generally it will be a good year," said Teo, who is the founder and chair of the World of Feng Shui [WOFS].

LILLIAN TOO. A magical year for women, the feng shui expert says upon arrival at the NAIA on Friday. JOY GOSO

Harvard graduate

An MBA graduate from the prestigious Harvard Business School in the United States, Teo was a leader who credits her success to an "in-depth knowledge of feng shui in her every decision in life," according to a press statement from WOFS-Philippines.

WOFS-Philippines president, Marilou Albiso, noted the growing interest in feng shui among Filipinos.

Last year, more than 5,000 people attended Teo's first feng shui extravaganza in Manila. It was in connection the Philippines to your part of her annual feng shui road show.

Teo was in Singapore and Kuala Lumpur before coming to Manila. From here, she will go to Canada and the United States.

Benefits everyone

She said that feng shui, which is about space and time, used to be "illustrated in equations."

She stressed that feng shui experts are not fortune tellers. "The knowledge of feng shui is rather technical and scientific," according to Teo.

"Feng shui is very useful. It can benefit everyone from top decision to tycoons to leaders because you will know where you will benefit most as well as the danger areas," she said.

Abalos: Computerization of poll ...

From page A1

a law for which we're not ready," Abalos told reporters.

"If we bid because of lack of preparation, people will rush it. If we lose time, after I'm forced to face below the ground."

The Comelec chief clarified that he welcomed the enactment of the Automated Election System law, (Republic Act No. 9369) but that he was concerned about the timing of its implementation.

"It would have been a good legacy for me because this is likely the last election that I will oversee," he said.

Comelec is scheduled to convene its advisory council on Monday to make a final decision on the viability of pilot-testing the automated voting, counting, canvassing, transmission and consolidation as provided for by the new law.

Council's recommendation

Last month, the council—composed of representatives from other government agencies and technical consultants—recommended that the pilot testing be dropped for lack of time and preparations.

"If you go against the advice of the council and you fail, God knows where you'll end up," Abalos said. "Everyone is saying it's operationally impossible because it's almost Monday."

The council backed full automation for 2010, adding that two years would be needed for the study and selection of the best technology, training of personnel and public dissemination and education.

By e-mail or fax

Abalos said the Comelec could still implement the electronic transmission of voting results since this could be done with the use of simple technology such as texting, e-mail or fax.

"Electronic transmission would lessen incidents of possible cheating," he said.

ABALOS. Only in the ARMM

GORDON. No excuses

Abalos said that the Comelec, if pressed, could still endorse partial computerization in the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao, instead of to two highly-automated cities and two provinces each in Luzon, Visayas and Mindanao, as required by the new law.

"Perhaps we can implement it to just one region, ARMM, because that's a problem area," he added.

No recount

Ekkehard Gonzales earlier expressed difficulty securing the approval of local government officials for the pilot testing. Comelec last month listed 12 possible areas where partial automation can be implemented.

"Some local officials said they wanted to study it first while some asked what if problems occurred and caused confusion among the candidates and the electorate," he said.

Abalos also said that the Comelec had not received the P26 billion which Malacañang said it had set aside for the law's initial implementation, because the law requires that the funds come from the Comelec's election modernization funds.

"We don't have such funds as of now," he said.

James Arthur Jimenez, director of the Comelec education and information department, said technology suppliers required a certain amount of time before they could work on automation pilot-testing.

'He has no excuse'

Sen. Richard Gordon said yesterday that Abalos could be held liable for neglect of duty if he failed to implement partial automation of the May 14 elections.

"He has an excuse. He has no room to maneuver. He has to implement this. He can't check out of this," Gordon, who vigorously pushed for the bill's approval by the Senate and then by the House, told reporters.

"The ball is in the court of Chair Abalos to make sure that the law is implemented."

President Macapagal-Arroyo signed the measure into law last Thursday, paving an end to the struggle between Abalos and lawmakers on the wisdom of implementing poll automation with less than four months left before the election.

Possible cases

Gordon, sponsor and author of the measure, said that Abalos would face obstruction of implementing poll automation with less than four months left before the election.

"He can be liable for neglect of duty, misappropriation. He can make a case for him for malfeasance in the Ombudsman. He's liable for culpable violation of Constitution. He can be removed by impeachment," he said.

The proposed law seeks to amend and expand the scope of the current automation law by authorizing the use of an AES (automated election system) in the voting, counting, consolidation, canvassing and transmission of results and other electoral processes.

The automation includes the speedy electronic transmission of results in real time or within the hour, and the voter-verifiable paper audit trail.

Gordon said that there was still time to lease and bid machines for the May polls.

US machines can be used

Machines, like those used in San Francisco and Broward in the US which were shown in Newsweek last year, could be brought in to the country, and be bidded out within the next three months, according to the senator.

"I believe it can easily be done. They're already in the US and they're everywhere in the world and you can lease some of the machines right away," he said.

Gordon said that the machine used in Hawaii had all the features required by the automation law, such as a voter-verifiable paper audit trail, security against unauthorized access and accessibility for illiterates and persons with disabilities.

Gordon said the Comelec could complete the bidding in less than two months if the poll body's resolution is approved only on provision and notice.

"He (Abalos) has to implement it, it's no way. He can use Batanes, Manila, Baguio, Angeles or Olongapo. There's no other city he wants," he added. "The important thing is to stop fucking out."

Atong deal kept secret for security ...

From page A1

secrecy is the issue, it was already a public discussion," Villa-Ignacio said.

Sleeping in needle house

Villa-Ignacio also said that with the prevailing speculation that Ang would agree to an immunity deal, the latter's lawyers should have attended the pre-trial proceedings.

"Any law student knows that the first agenda in a pre-trial is plea bargaining. And with reports that Ang will testify against Jocelyn Enrile, [the defense lawyers] should have showed up," he said.

Villa-Ignacio said that apart from plea bargaining, pre-trial proceedings also involved stipulations of fact, marking of exhibits and admissions.

"They were caught sleeping in the needle house. They should not blame us for their lapse," he said.

According to Ingming, the plea bargain agreement contains information prejudicial to the defense of Enrile, who is accused of amassing some P4 billion in illegitimate wealth.

"The hidden agenda is discernible as the latter was not even given a copy of an important document that may affect our client. What law authorizes such practice?" Ingming had said.

'Safer' facility

After the presentation of the plea bargaining agreement on the Sandiganbayan Special Division, Ang's lawyers manifested in open court that they want to their client's life might have gotten more into endangered if the proposed deal.

But Villa-Ignacio said it was now up to Ang's lawyers to request the court that he be moved to a detention facility "safer" than the Metro Manila District Jail (MMDJ), where he is currently being held.

Asked if he and the other prosecutors would object to Ang's transfer to a facility other than a jail, Villa-Ignacio said they would first have to study the formal request.

When Ang was extradited from the United States on Nov. 10 and detained at the National Bureau of Investigation headquarters, the prosecution panel objected to his transfer to a detention center in the NBI facility instead of being committed to the custody of Director Nestor Mantaring.

Almost immediately, Ang was transferred by the Bureau of Jail Management and Penology to the MMDJ at Camp Bagong Diwa in Bicutan, Taguig.

Prosecutors also had purported threats on Ang's life in the city jail.

THIRD REDUCTION THIS MONTH

Oil prices cut by 50¢ per liter

By Abigail L. Ho

OIL COMPANIES YESTERDAY CUT THE pump prices of gasoline, diesel and kerosene by another 50 centavos a liter as crude oil prices continued to decline in the international market.

Petron Corp., Pilipinas Shell Petroleum Corp., Chevron Philippines Inc., Caltex Philippines Corp., Flying V, Seaoil Philippines Inc. and Phoenix Petroleum Philippines Inc. all adjusted their fuel prices at 2 p.m. yesterday.

Total Philippines Corp. followed suit at 8 p.m. last night.

This was the third price reduction implemented by the oil firms this year.

Data from the Department of Energy showed that the regional benchmark Dubai crude did in an average of $51.62 a barrel in January from $58.66 a barrel last month.

The price of refreshed gasoline based on the Mean of Platts Singapore (MOPS) benchmark for refined petroleum products also dropped to an average of $51.44/a barrel as of Jan. 25, from last month's $58.10 a barrel.

MOPS-based diesel were down to a $58.29 a barrel average in the first 25 days of the month after ranging to $72.26 a barrel in December 2006.

"The further softening of oil prices in the international market is now beginning to provide some relief to motorists. As the end of the winter season approaches, we are hoping that prices of oil in the international market will remain stable given that oil supplies remain adequate," Energy Secretary Raphael Lotilla said in a statement yesterday.

World oil prices stood below $54 on Friday after a new percent fall the previous day.

Oil prices are down about 13 percent since the start of January, despite Opec's pledges to cut supplies.

Oil firms, particularly the members of the Independent Philippine Petroleum Companies Association, had earlier said that fuel prices would go down by P1.50/a liter this month.

Going into the final stretch of January, local oil firms had fulfilled this commitment, implementing its third fuel price cut yesterday, for a total of P1.50/a liter so far this year.

Yesterday's price adjustment brought petroleum refreshed gasoline prices to between P54.20 and P57 a liter, diesel to between P50.25 and P52.50 a liter and kerosene to between P48.45 and P51.60/a liter.

Jungle
International Preschool Franchise Presentation
- North American based
- Includes Training, Software, Curriculum, Support
- Excellent business opportunity in a high growth market
Franchise Presentation will be on January 30 and 31.
Limited Spaces available
Inquire and book Now to reserve a spot at 0917/631-1791 or Cellphone# (0920) 265-03-47
www.learningjungle.com/franchise

COPIERS SALES
COPYTRADE

Bilbil Away!
65 pounds LOSS, as clinically proven
ABS HERBS
HERBAL Tea
Slimming
Before
After
Available Nationwide
mercury drug
Leading drugstores and supermarkets
www.abs-herbs.com.ph

MAMA WARMER
The First & only Automatic Feeder Warmer Machine
Franchise NOW!!
CASH BASIS and EASY PAYMENT
Mailbox (02) 740-1313
(02) 711-6330
Telefax (02) 742-8858

idec
The New Split Type Aircon
Wall-Mounted
1hp-P16,500
Floor Mounted
Free Installation!
Call 343-2818,341-4731,(0919)3482183

OPENHOUSE
FEBRUARY 03,2007
TAGAYTAY EXECUTIVE VILLAGE
Own a lot for as low as P12,338/mo.
812-2222 687-3333 242-1212
818-8888 www.cityland.net 243-6565

DAIKO REACH-IN CHILLERS&FREEZERS
20cu.ft. Freezer (Static) P58,000.00*
20cu.ft. Combi Freezer/Chiller (Static) P55,500.00*
DONT MISS IT!!!
40cu.ft. Chiller (Blower) P68,600.00*
40cu.ft. Freezer (Blower) P85,500.00*
(Static) P83,000.00*
40cu.ft. Combi Freezer/Chiller
(Blower) P85,500.00*
(Static) P80,000.00*
NEW YEAR SALE
HURRY!!!
*ITEMS SUBJECT TO QTY. NOT CALL NOW!!!
Visit Us at: Pilipinas Hino Building, Edsa Corner Madison Street, Mandaluyong
Call us at 633-8752/53 www.meristainless.com

Ming's GINSENG Candy
Ming's PEI PA KOA CANDY
Ming's GREEN TEA
PUREGOLD TROPICAL HUT 100
HR FOODS PHILS
WE WELCOME LUZON, VISAYAS AND MINDANAO DISTRIBUTORS

CLEARANCE SALE!
SAVE UP TO 70% ON SELECTED ITEMS
EXTENDED UP TO FEB. 18, 2007!*
9 am to 4 pm DAILY
FREE!!
1 pc. SALAD PLATE
for every Php1,000.00 worth of purchase in a single receipt. (CASH BASIS ONLY)
Noritake
The Finest Name in Dinnerware

FIRST
PRIMUS INTER PARES
ATENEO MBA PROGRAMS
DEVELOPING LEADERS AMONG LEADERS
DRIVEN BY EXCELLENCE AND THE COMMITMENT TO SERVE
MBA STANDARD PROGRAM
ATENEO-REGIS ACCELERATED MBA PROGRAM
MIDDLE MANAGER MBA PROGRAM
MBA SPECIAL CONCENTRATION IN HEALTH PROGRAM
ONLINE ADMISSION IS ALSO ACCEPTED. PLEASE VISIT http://gsb.ateneo.edu AND CLICK ONLINE ADMISSION AND FILL OUT THE APPLICATION FORM.
SCHEDULE OF ENTRANCE EXAMINATIONS
February 3 & 17, 2007
Saturday, 8:00 a. m.
AMBITION EQUALS

UNO unfazed by defections

By TJ Burgonio

THE UNITED OPPOSITION (UNO) insisted yesterday it was unperturbed by the departure of former Senators Vicente Sotto III, Tessie Aquino-Oreta and Francisco Tatad from its ranks, and by Sen. Juan Ponce Enrile's resignation as chair of the Firestorm rig Marcos Pilipinas.

"UNO remains whole. It's not bothered by all this. UNO's constituents are strong on their own," Sen. Loisa "Lel" Ejercito, wife of ousted President and UNO leader Joseph Estrada, said in an interview.

Ejercito said she wasn't surprised by Enrile's resignation.

"That's to be expected. He joined the majority in the Senate except last night," she said.

Enrile's chief of staff, Cipi Baviera, confirmed that the senator had written Estrada that he was resigning as PMP chair but would continue to remain as party member.

"He was resigning as PMP chairman so as not to be a burden to the party since he could not support the full senatorial slate proposed by the UNO ticket," Baviera said in a statement.

Enrile had indicated that while he was committed to support the candidacy of San Juan Mayor JV Ejercito, Estrada's son, he could not "in conscience" support some of his presumptive UNO-run considering to include in its senatorial slate. He did not identify them.

The UNO is drafting a line-up that includes Senate President Manuel Villar Jr., Sen. Ralph Recto and Rep. Alan Peter Cayetano of the Nacionalista Party; Senate Majority Leader Francis Pangilinan and Sen. Mar Roxas, both of the Liberal Party; and Sen. Noli De Castro, among others.

THE MASTHEAD posing for a photograph after the signing of a memorandum of agreement for the coverage on election coverage at the GMA 7 office in Quezon City (from left): Sheryll Felipe-Garcia, president and CEO, GMA Network Inc.; Sandy Prieto-Romualdez, president, Philippine Daily Inquirer Inc.; Roman "Boy Jr." Gonzalez, COO, PSPA; Jodel Gallaron, president, New Media Inc.; Alexander Pateo, GIC-Philippine Center for Investigative Journalism; Karim Rangwala, SVP AMA Education Systems Holdings Inc.; Gilberto R. Duavit Jr., SVP and COO-GMA Network Inc.; Eugenio Tiu Jr., publisher, Philippine Daily Inquirer Inc.; Ernesto Aborita, SVP-corporate business group, PLDT; Marilen Danguilan, group head-public affairs, Smart Communications; Fr. Francis Lucas, president, Catholic Media Network; Marlen G. Ving, editor-in-chief, Newsbreak Publishing Inc.; and Manny Pangilinan, chairman of board, PLDT and Smart. (Jimmy Yu)

'Team Unity' shaping up

From page A-1

ing in the run-up to the midterm elections.

The senator said the 12 senators he's count was currently being filled up by leaders of the ruling Lakas-CMD, including Senate President Juan Flavier, Senate Majority Leader Ralph Recto and Senate President Pro Tempore Manuel Villar Jr.

Ejercito's office confirmed the resignation on grounds that he could not support in full the proposed senatorial ticket of the United Opposition, but said he would remain in PMP party membership.

Speaking on radio dzBB, Estrada said the President wanted to present a unified slate in the senate as a first step toward healing the wounds that had scarred the country since 2001.

He also said that the coalition could not deny the drawing power of indefectible senators, which would only be enhanced by the administration's machinery.

Wer i but 2 Trojan horses'

But another administration stalwart, Surigao del Sur Rep. Prospero Pichay Jr., warned against the inclusion of Sotto and Oreta in the so-called unity slate, calling them "Trojan horses" that is the end would destroy the administration's line-up.

"Were you forgotten the myth of the Greeks' Trojan horse?" asked Pichay.

He was referring to the giant, hollow wooden horse given as a gift by the Greeks while pretending to abandon their siege on the city of Troy. Greek warriors hiding inside the horse eventually seized the city.

Mincing no words, Pichay referred to "one not, but two Trojan horses."

Strange bedfellows

House Majority Leader Prospero Nograles was more diplomatic.

"It may be politically unpalatable ... but politics makes for strange bedfellows," Nograles said. "There are no permanent enemies, just permanent political interests in this land of ours."

Sotto and Oreta accepted their opposition colleagues last Wednesday by opening the LOP and aligning themselves with the Nationalist People's Coalition, which is part of the administration coalition in the House.

"When they were still bouncing from Estrada, they kept on accusing the President (Arroyo) of lying, cheating and stealing. Now, they want us to be endorsed by the President. What kind of politics are they playing?" said Pichay.

"How can you campaign for a party offering new faces, new politics if you will include in the slate those people advocating the ouster of the President?"

He said talking in terms and clerics "would reward political opportunism."

More defections?

Speaker Jose de Venecia predicted the number of governors and local executives in the Lakas-CMD because of infighting within the opposition.

After 12 governors joined the ruling party last Wednesday, "more local officials have answered of their intention to take their rank as Lakas members because of the ruling party's formidable political machinery," he said.

Claudio said a unity ticket would keep the election campaign "non-confrontational and, therefore, not disruptive of the present economic growth the country is experiencing."

One vision

But in a phone interview, Claudio would not confirm if Sotto and Oreta would really be included in the administration slate for the senatorial race.

Claudio said the administration was "open" to talking to or supporting candidates "who at least share the need to uphold the national interest, especially in terms of preserving the momentum for economic growth."

"You don't have to be black or white about whether you are administration or opposition as long as there is a commonality in purpose and vision."

NPC predicament

The question of whether the NPC would align itself with the administration in the senatorial race is expected to be answered soon.

Sotto said the party would have a "crucial" meeting next week to discuss, among others, its senatorial slate.

He said the NPC might be in a predicament because this would be the first time, if at all, that it would be fielding senatorial candidates.

"Will they align itself with the administration as it had traditionally done in the House, or align with the opposition or put up their own slate?" Sotto said in a phone interview.

"I'm sure the leaders will address this on Tuesday," he said.

Sotto had shrugged off as speculation that he and Oreta's joining the NPC were an indication they were joining the administration senatorial ticket. With a report from TJ Burgonio

PDI, GMA 7, PLDT link up for Eleksyon '07

From page A-1

to help it get the election news as accurately, as fairly and as quickly as possible," said Inquirer publisher Eugenio Tiu Jr. at the partners' signing of the memorandum of agreement yesterday in Quezon City.

He said the country's leading newspaper would tap its research team in file in-depth reports.

GMA chairperson Felipe Gozon said he was confident that "Eleksyon 2007" would be a resounding success as "the partners have all renewed their commitment to ensure that the nation will have an honest election with credible results."

PCIJ OIC Alecks Pabico said the coverage of election-related issues would be more perfected. "Like a home run, coverage or beating match."

More depth

He said a study conducted by the Center for Media Freedom and Responsibility on the 2004 election showed that there was an obsession with personalities, opinion polls and "relationship" rather than issues and platforms.

He said he hopes this year's coverage will have more depth.

Masthead editor in chief Marites Ving expressed confidence that the partners' joined forces would help voters make informed choices.

"There is strength in platforms ... [we] will make sense of the news using the vast resources and enormous reach of the GMA Network and other partners," she said.

PLDT provides data links

To help media achieve this goal, PLDT chairperson Manuel V. Pangilinan said his group would provide more voice and data links than it did in the past.

He said PLDT and Smart would provide more leased lines, satellite television services, prepaid cards, SIM cards and 3G services for participants in the "Eleksyon 2007" initiative.

"The most important change is in video—the 3G 3G phones will be provided [so they could send] video clips live from the field. In March, we should be able to introduce satellite phones in partnership with Inmarsat," Pangilinan said. "GMA can do a ODN- or BNC-type of report from the field. This is a profound show of [our] confidence that the election results reflect the will of the people."

AMA volunteers

AMA Education Systems executive vice president Karim Rangwala said AMA volunteers in 32 information centers (out of around 75) would be able to count five million votes 24 hours after the polls close on May 14, 12 million more votes after another 24 hours and 8 million more votes after another 24 hours.

He added that AMA volunteers in 13 of NCR's 17 cities would be able to process two million votes in the first 24 hours after the polls close and the rest of the votes in the next 48 hours.

CMS president Fr. Francis Lucas said their network's 32 station nationwide would cover the election process by the total areas instead of focusing on "hyperactive" areas.

HK maids to hold protest rally over new rules

From page A-1

In turn, up to a dozen customers for Filipino maids in Hong Kong have already been interviewed because of the new rules introduced by the Philippine Overseas Employment Administration (POEA) last Dec. 16 that disallow domestic workers from leaving the country unless they undergo a skills and language training course, said Dolores Balthazar, chair of the Coalition of Filipino Exiled Migrants in Hong Kong.

The new DFW package—ostensibly aimed at enhancing Filipino competitiveness as "supermaids"—also sets a minimum age requirement of 25, a higher minimum wage of US$400 and prohibits agencies from charging placement fees.

'Super-assertion'

But Balthazar denounced the supermaid training requirement as an unnecessary delay and another attempt at "super-extortion."

Another concern cited jointly by Kalayaan for Migrant Workers (HK) Society and the Asia Pacific Mission for Migrants also blamed the training requirement as nothing but "an additional financial burden on DFWs."

The training fee is said to run between P8,000 and P13,000, plus a P1,000 fee for each of the Tesda and Owwa certificates.

Balthazar warned that whether the policy was scrapped, many more—perhaps thousands more—will lose their jobs.

She cited the case of outbound domestic Dina Mabalot, who was all set to leave for Hong Kong on Jan. 9 but was stopped and told by her agency to go back home to attend the Technical Education and Skills Development Authority (Tesda) and Philippine Overseas Employment Administration (Owwa).

Mabalot immediately complied, only to learn later that her Hong Kong employer had backed out on Jan. 12, after realizing that it would take her up to two months to complete the training and the extra paperwork.

Mabalot was outraged, as she and her relatives had shouldered the recruitment fee of about P60,000 that her employer was supposed to pay. She also said she felt the training was overly unnecessary, as she had already worked in Hong Kong for 10 years.

It's a feeling shared by Aileen Talusan, whose previous work experience as a domestic helper in Hong Kong enabled her to speak Cantonese fluently.

Talusan already had a visa from Hong Kong immigration when she was told to undergo training—which she obviously does not need.

One of Talusan's relatives in Hong Kong says her employer is burning over the delay, as she was expected to arrive no later than Jan. 15. The only reason she has not been sacked is because the spunky Cantonese, which is important for the job that awaits her here.

Employers turned off

Ejercito, one of the leading recruitment agencies for Filipinos in Hong Kong, noted that employers are getting turned off by the long wait for helpers from the Philippines and are looking at hires from other nationalities—ethnic Indonesians—who are about to overtake Filipinos as the dominant ethnic group in the domestic helper market in Hong Kong.

Enter Viagra, who co-owns Ejercito with husband Ric, said they have had about five cases of employers backing out after being told of the new POEA regulations. She added that there could have been more, had they not taken it upon themselves to discourage employers who appear to need a helper immediately.

The minimum age requirement has also caused Ejercito to lose potential clients.

"We are only dealt with direct hires [here in the Philippines], many of the employers who approach us are those looking at hiring young workers," said Viagra. "But are intimidated by the fact that they have to comply with the new age requirement."

But neither age nor training is seen by militant groups as a vital factor in ensuring the well-being of foreign domestic workers, at least in Hong Kong.

"We're calling for behind such a provision is unclear from the perceived reason that domestic helpers who are 23 and can better fight for their rights to speak and unsupported by objective facts," she said.

Regarding the minimum wage requirement of $400, DFW leaders said many HK workers are already earning at least $3,823 more than that amount.

No-placement fee rule

The no-placement fee rule, meanwhile, is setting a bottom's not, as Filipinos who come here to work are known to pay exorbitant an average of $6,000.

Millionaire to Hong Kong are not about to disagree with the no-placement fee policy, but said doubts on the ability of the government to enforce the rule.

The Filipino joint statement said, "There already exists a policy that says placement fees charged by private recruitment agencies should not exceed the equivalent of one month's salary of the OFW in the host country. Yet, our experience shows numerous cases of overcharging by recruitment agencies through various modus operandi."

And the workers and recruitment, Labor Attaché to Hong Kong Bernardino Jolly said he had already secured exemptions from the age and training requirements for those already working as domestic helpers here.

"At first we were told that there would be no exemptions to the rules," said Jolly. "But I was convinced by POEA to reconsider, saying those might create bias."

The Federated Association of Manpower Exporters Inc. (FAME), a group of recruitment agencies in the Philippines, is also requesting of further concessions from the POEA.

Concessions

In an advisory issued to its members, FAME said that during a meeting with officials from the Department of Labor and Employment, POEA, Tesda and Owwa, it was agreed that:

1. Returning workers, and those who have recently undergone abroad in the same region, will be exempt from the Tesda visit and Owwa seminar.

2. Those bound for Hong Kong and Taiwan will be exempted from Tesda assessments, but will still need to obtain a certificate of training.

3. Returning workers will still be able to leave if they are at least 23 years old. First-timers should be at least 23 years old and have at least two years of college education or two years' vocational training.

Labor Undersecretary Danny Cruz confirmed in a telephone interview that the agreement was reached by FAME officials alone.

"The POEA is still studying whether it can promulgate [the changes] without amending the guidelines issued earlier," said Cruz. "But we hope to be able to do it within the week."

Possible drop in deployments

Any move by DOLE to enact a possible drop in the number of deployments to such a land of destination as Hong Kong could set controversy sooner.

Already, the Filipinos are losing their dominance position in the territory's domestic helper market. From a high of 90 percent earlier this year, Filipinos now comprise only 52 percent of the total foreign domestic workforce here.

That translates to 120,700 as the end of last year. Of this, about 30 percent, or 36,210, are new hires. There are the ones likely to lose their jobs, if no immediate relief is forthcoming from the steps revealed by the agreement's staff meeting, but hastily implemented labor policy.

GMA bats for Asean as major trading bloc

To next page of 4

nerate, equitable economic development and narrowed socio-economic development gaps.

Aseans first attempted to integrate with the implementation of the Asean Free Trade Area in 1992.

Since then, trade within Asean has grown four times, prompting Asean leaders to decide to accelerate the establishment of an Asean Community by 2015, five years ahead of the original deadline of 2020.

Asean also took steps during the Cebu summit to bring down more barriers to trade, to a bid to reduce transaction costs and the cost of doing business in the region.

The 10-member Asean includes Brunei, Singapore, Vietnam, Cambodia, Laos, Thailand, Malaysia, Indonesia, Philippines and Burma (Myanmar).

Global interest in Asean

The emergence of Asean as a major trading bloc explains the interest shown in the region by world leaders in the ongoing annual meeting of the World Economic Forum, which gathers in this resort in the Swiss Alps more than 2,000 political, economic and civil society leaders.

The President is taking part in two discussions on Asean. The second is to be held later today with Asean chief Lim.

Extraordinary Ties: Preserving Some Cooperation, said in a briefing paper for the WEF that Asean has recovered remarkably well, a decade since the financial meltdown that started in 1997.

The summit includes the growing trade with big markets like China and India, as well as the growing popularity as investment sites of countries like the Philippines, Thailand, Malaysia, Indonesia and Vietnam.

"In the future, the Asean nations could find useful niches as sub-hubs for sub-diversification for multinationals, with the right investment frameworks and policies, they will attract global manufacturing and services companies eager to reduce the risks of supply chain disruptions or bankruptcies of parent companies that are mounting against China and India," the paper said.

Ratings upgrade

The prospect of an imminent sovereign ratings upgrade on the Philippines by global rating agencies has lifted the spirits of Filipino officials here eager to promote the country to the select group of business, political and other leaders gathered here for the WEF.

There is clear recognition that the Philippines is on the right track," Press Secretary Ignacio Bunye said in a statement here.

"This is indeed a boost (one not easily for the Philippine economy but for every Filipino household that will reap the fruits of more jobs, enterprise, peace and stability and a government delivering the goods in terms of health, education, food and infrastructure," he said.

Bunye made the statement following reports that the government's economic team was moving with officials of Fitch Ratings, one of the three major rating agencies who are an global debt watchdogs, in hopes of a credit upgrade.

Sovereign ratings are assessments of the relative likelihood that a borrower government will default on its obligations. Governments seek credit ratings to ease their access to the international capital markets where many investors prefer rated issues.

The President, who last week asserted that 2007 would be a boom year for the Philippine economy, has said that she intends to bring the message to the more than 2,000 world leaders gathered here that the Philippines is ripe for trade and investment.

To-do schedule

On Thursday, the President met with the first of a long list of international business executives on her to-do schedule on the sidelines of the WEF meeting.

Manabu A. Inoue, co-executive chair of the Lausanne-based Sega Holdings, proposed investing in a security solutions system in the Philippines to help the government stamp out counterfeiting and smuggling.

Sega, a multinational company headquartered in Lausanne, is the leading global provider of security tags and solutions for most of the world's luxury items. It is also an expert in document security by preventing government products like passports, postage or excise stamps, checks or lottery tickets.

Inoue said he was offering an integrated technology that will help the Philippine government to recover tax lues with greater efficiency and security.

Confidence in RP

"By this proposal, we are affirming our confidence in the Philippines as an investment site, and as a partner in a major cooperative undertaking," Inoue said in a statement.

Hope, which has an 80-year history of being a trusted advisor to central banks, governments and high-security printers, will host the needs of the investments involved in rolling out the proposed technology and infrastructure, under the bold supreme security scheme.

FOUNDING CHAIR of the World Economic Forum Klaus Schwab receives President Arroyo at the congress center prior to the WEF opening. A Swiss professor, Schwab founded the forum in 1971. PHOTOGRAPHER

Its figures were disclosed, however.

Gaye is said to be the only company capable of creating an integrated system through "both end-user" and wholesale/custom solutions in printed products and documents of value, such as currencies and passports.

Some of its solutions in place in five continents allow for easy identification of counterfeit notes and smuggled items, thus helping in raising customs revenues.

Inoue later hosted dinner for Ms Arroyo attended by chief executive officers of some of the world's biggest companies.

The President is also scheduled to meet with executives from Credit Suisse, Citibank, Hedrick Group (Europe), AMAE Bank (Switzerland), Telstech, Intel Corp, and Union Bonnia.

Financial market experts, like the DBS and ING investment banks, believe a credit upgrade was "long overdue" for the Philippines.

The Singapore-based DBS noted in its latest analysis on the economy the Philippines' increasing capability to narrow its budget gap and the gains from a strong peso.

The government clearly hopes that the string of positive economic figures, including last year's budget deficit of about P62 billion, which was much lower than the targeted P125 billion, would make a favorable impression on the credit rating agencies who are in the global debt watchdog.

Last year, the outlook on the Philippines' stock standing by all three major credit-rating firms—Fitch, Moody's Investors Service and Standard & Poor's—improved from "negative" to "stable."

Below investment grade

But the country's sovereign credit standing with all three ratings firms remains below investment grade.

A ratings upgrade to near investment grade will lead to lower borrowing costs for the government because of increased confidence that the country will meet its credit obligations and thus free up more loans funds for social and infrastructure spending.

An improved economic environment for credit rating purposes rests principally on four perspectives of foreign investors, who would then be encouraged to bring in more direct investments and create more domestic job opportunities.

Besides Bunye, other Philippine officials and businessmen who were with the President during yesterday's meeting on Asean were Trade Secretary Peter Cayetano, Budget Secretary Romulo Neri, Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas Governor Amando Tetangco Jr., Comelec chair Benjamin Abalos Sr., Philippine Stock Exchange president Jose Augusto and Petronas's United Arab Emirates group.

Living the Paulinian Creed

It started as St. Paul Institute,
evolved into St. Paul College of Manila,
and now stands tall as St. Paul University Manila.

In its 95 years as an educational institution,
SPUM has seen hundreds of thousands of young girls
enter its portals,
stay their destined hours and walk away
to take their places in the outside world,
as teachers in schools,
as leaders in government,
as decent and nurses in hospitals,
as accountants, bankers, and managers
in entrepreneurs in business,
as skilled thinkers and experts,
stars in the realm of music and other arts,
as nuns in religious congregations,
and as wives and mothers
in homes here and abroad.

Whatever she may be,
the Paulinian stood firm in her faith,
steadfast in her love,
hopeful in the face of trials,
bringing the light of God's grace
to every life she touched.

From this wide base of Paulinian graduates,
some looked further up,
pushed loftier ambitions,
reached greater heights,
in education,
in business,
in music,
in the arts,
in government,
in religion.

On Sunday, 28 January 1917,
St. Paul University Manila
opens its doors to Paulinians,
who have shown the world
how for the Paulinian spirit
can bring the undaunted heart!
CARITAS OMNIUM CAUSAT MIHI

ST. PAUL UNIVERSITY MANILA

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER

OPINION

Partners

JOSEPH ESTRADA SAYS HE IS "THE LAST MAN standing for the truth." Not even the disgraced former president's die-hard fans and supporters might find it hard to swallow now that Charlie "Atong" Ang is corroborating his shocking P70 million from the share of farmers from the excise tax on tobacco in 1998. What is more believable is that he is the last man claiming innocence in a treasurer of graft and corruption.

EDITORIAL

The third member of their group was actually the first to come forward and confess the crime. That was Jinggoy Estrada's friend Yolanda "Chavit" Singson, and he did it in October 2000, triggering an impeachment trial and later a people uprising that forced Estrada to step down from the presidency three months later. Singson said he and Ang had rendezvoused at a check worth P130 million and delivered the money to Estrada's house in Greenhills, San Juan, but Ang only turned over P70 million to Estrada. When Estrada demanded where the rest of the money went, Ang said he had given P20 million to Estrada's wife Luisa "Loi" Ejercito (who is now a senator) and P15 million to their son Jinggoy (also a senator now) and kept P25 million for himself, according to Singson.

Estrada has repeatedly denied Singson's claim, which forms part of the P4-billion plunder case filed in April 2001 against the deposed president and several others. Ang included. But Ang who branded Singson's allegations as a lie during the impeachment trial has turned around and confirmed the story. The confirmation is consistent in a plea bargain agreement wherein Ang agreed to return the P25 million and testify in cases about which he has "personal knowledge" in exchange for the downgrading of the charge against him from plunder to bribery.

Curiously, Ang will no longer be called in testify against Estrada. Prosecutors said it is too late to present him as a witness because the government has already rested its case. Anyway, they added, the government was able to build a strong case even without Ang's testimony.

But if the case against Estrada is strong, then Ang is just as certain to grow old in jail, being Estrada's co-accused. And if his testimony is no longer necessary to clinch the case against the former president, what more important purpose does the plea bargain agreement serve? Why should one of the principals in our history's most celebrated graft case, someone who caused the government much trouble and expense to get extradited after he fled to the United States, be allowed to get away with a light penalty if his cooperation is of very limited value to the government?

No matter what the lawyers say, the fact is this: whether he is called to testify in the trial or not, Ang's reinstatement of the P130 million scam can only strengthen the case against Estrada. Two self-confessed partners in crime, pointing their fingers at their boss, present an almost unassailable argument for conviction, both in the court of law and in the court of public opinion. And the administration has achieved both, even if Malacañang officials continue to profess ignorance about the deal cut with Ang by government prosecutors and approved by Ombudsman Merceditas Gutierrez.

Whatever its effect on the Estrada case or the coming elections, Ang's turnaround should put fear in the hearts of corrupt officials. For when the long arm of the law holds someone by the throat, the loyalty of cronies can get crushed in the process.

Now it is Ang being brought back to face the music and the singing. When will Jocelyn Bolante come home and raise cheers on the P728-million fertilizer scam?

Marooned

I MUST BE SAID GEORGE BUSH DID HIS BEST ON TUESDAY night in Washington as he faced a Congress heavy with Democrats and at least 10 presidential hopefuls. Indeed, applause his best gesture stood Chief Justice Roberts, he had this to say about Iraq: "On this day, as this hour, it is still within our power to shape the outcome of this battle. So let us find our resolve and turn events toward victory."

FOREIGN COMMENT

Bush is caught between the impossibility of his beliefs and the harsh realities of the political and public opinion that he continues stubbornly to misjudge. In him, Iraq is a war in which mercies can be victorious, in much of the woke world, it is a disastrous mess that has to be cleaned up, one way or the other. The President is marooned. Americans are isolated. *The Age (Melbourne, Australia)*

Publisher **Isaac Belmonte**
Editor-in-Chief/CEO **Juan L. Mercado**
Managing Editor **Jose Ma. D. Regalado**
Associate Editor **Rolando O. Tolentino**
Assistant Editor for Standards **Rosalie A. Gonzalez-Abad**
News Editor **Antonio T. Enriquez Jr.** • Chief, News Day Desk **Neil G. Pasion**
Opinion Editor **Jose V. Abueva**
Sections/Features Editor **Francisco S. Sandoval Jr.**
Senior Desk Editor **Jose P. Sonido II, Jr.**
Editor at Literature **Augusto Antonio**
Chief Photographer **Noel D. Pabuayon**
Art & Graphics Director **Grace A. Velasco**

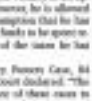
Vice Chairman **Victor A. Pastor**
President **Alexandra Prieto-Romualdez**
Executive Vice President **Diana G. Nuyda**
Senior Vice President for Sales and Marketing **Rizalina B. Mendoza**
Vice Chairman **Juan K. Quirino**
Officer-in-Charge **Jesus Jesse B. Tee**

Publication Address **Letter Square Tree**
Telephone numbers, e-mail addresses, etc. for the PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER, Inc. [illegible]

All rights reserved. No part may be reproduced in any form or by any means without the permission of the Philippine Daily Inquirer, Inc. Unauthorized copying, recording, storage in any retrieval system or transmission is prohibited.

'Locus standi'

SEPARATE OPINION



Augusto A. Cruz

LOCUS STANDI IS A JUDICIAL CONCEPT that has caused not a little confusion even among lawyers because of its inconsistent application by the courts of justice, particularly the Supreme Court. It is often applied by judges as an excuse for not deciding a case notwithstanding the importance of the matter raised and the urgent necessity to rule upon them.

As one of the essential requisites for the exercise of the power of judicial review, locus standi requires, according to the case of Integrated Bar of the Philippines v. Executive Secretary Zamora, 408 SCRA 1, that "the person challenging the act must have standing to challenge the validity of the subject act or issuance; otherwise stated, he must have a personal and substantial interest in the case, such that he has sustained, or will sustain, direct injury as a result of its enforcement."

In Lozada v. Commission on Elections, 130 SCRA 804, the Supreme Court held that the petitioners were not proper parties to compel the respondents to call special elections to fill 22 vacancies in the legislature because they had only a "generalized interest" in the problem shared with the rest of the people.

In criminal cases, the offended party is regarded as only the principal witness for the prosecution, which represents not him but the State itself or, as the information would put it, the People of the Philippines. The theory is that when a crime is committed, it is the State whose laws are violated and therefore has the right to prosecute the wrongdoer.

A special rule governs prosecution for private crimes, like adultery, concubinage, and rape, which cannot be filed without the prior complaints of the offended party. Before the ordinary taxpayer was not considered to have a substantial interest in the validity of an appropriation law. Now, however, he is allowed to question it on the assumption that he has sustained or will sustain the public funds to be spent or the portion of the amount of the taxes he has paid.

In the first Emergency Powers Case, 84 Phil. 368, the Supreme Court declared: "The transcendental importance of these cases to the public demands that they be acted promptly and definitely, brushing aside, if we must, technicalities of procedure." This has given concurrent latitude to judges to apply or brush aside technicalities of procedure in the requirement of locus standi. A case in point is Kilosbayan v. Morato where in 231 SCRA 211, the Supreme Court decided that the petitioners was a proper party and in 249 SCRA 628, involving the same subject, held that it was not.

The original case against the construction alley of Mayor Alfredo Lim's passing or parking of signs on certain houses as occupied by persons convicted or suspected of drug trafficking was remanded by the Supreme Court to a regional trial court. Despite the apparent questions raised, the judge held that the Commission on Human Rights and the Mabini, an association of convicted lawyers, did not have locus standi. The Court of Appeals reversed the RTC and Lim appealed to the Supreme Court. The case was later dismissed "on technical grounds" in a minute resolution.

In some cases of judicial cop out was Cruz et v. De Villa 181 SCRA 622, where residents in several depressed communities in Metro Manila were subjected by policemen and soldiers to the so-called "areal saturation drives," more commonly identified with the "sonic" during the Japanese Occupation. The persons filed on their behalf by their barangay and other local government officials. The Supreme Court on the ground that the alleged victims themselves should have complained to the trial proper prosecutors.

In my dissent, I argued that the envisaged victims were the "little people" who had neither the means nor the courage to defy the government, which was why they sought the assistance of the petitioners. I said that if a house was on fire, it was not only its owner who had the right to call the firemen but other persons as well who had a personal reason to prevent the fire from spreading. But that point was eminently dismissed by my colleagues who merely applied the generally accepted issues regardless result.

I humbly claim that when a violation of the Constitution is involved, any citizen should be able to submit it to a court of justice for resolution. The case should not be simply dismissed for lack of party standing. All of us have a personal interest in the integrity of our fundamental law, and it is this attachment that should give every competent Filipino the right and duty to defend it. That responsibility should give him locus standi.

A new paradigm for global partnership

GET REAL

Solita Collas-Monsod

GENEVA—EVERYONE SEEMS TO AGREE—AS well as the narrative in the political and business world—seems to be in Davos for the World Economic Forum. But there are sites several other meetings going on here in Geneva, which have potentially greater impact on our the lives, plus ours. Kofi Annan is attending one of them, which has the impressive sounding title of "High Level Task Force on the Implementation of the Right to Development."

Right to Development? What is that? One may well ask. And rightly so, because it has been more breached than observed, or—perhaps more accurately—ignored, by various nations, mostly political, and also because it just hasn't been understood, although the Declaration on the Right to Development (DRD) was adopted by the United Nations in 1986).

But now there is a Human Rights Council, and nine years ago a Working Group on the Right to Development was created, which in turn created three years ago a High Level Task Force on a particular aspect of its implementation. The Task Force has recommended to the Working Group certain criteria for the periodic evaluation of global partnerships as identified in Millennium Development Goal 8 (MDG 8) from the perspective of the RtD. The Working Group, in turn, recommended these criteria to the Human Rights Council, which endorsed them, and the next step now is to operationalize the criteria, which is where I come in as a member of the Task Force's third session.

But before I go into that, let me just share with you the observation that for three it takes your breath away: it is hard to beat the sight of a world blanketed in pure white—particularly in a place as scenic as Geneva. The all-white and glittering shore of Christmas trees are nothing compared to the real thing when 24 hours of soft, fluffy snow. The wonder of it.

Now back to the main story. You may not have been aware of it, but when the MDG (approved by the G20 at the turn of the century) came out, it was noted that seven out of the eight goals, and the targets attached to them, involved only developing countries, as if the developed world had no responsibility in the matter.

Only the eighth goal includes the developed world, concerned as it is with "Developing [sic] A Global Partnership for Development," terms of trade, finance, debt, aid to landlocked and small island economies, essential drugs from pharmaceuticals, youth employment, and science and technology transfer are included in this goal, which is all very well and good. The problem is that while all the other goals involving the developing countries have time bound and measurable targets, this is not the case for global partnerships; in effect, letting the developed countries off the hook. And even then, I am informed, the United States refuses to accept that goal (Don't quote Bolton again).

What the Task Force (of which I am a member) is mandated to do is to apply this RtD criteria to these ephemeral global partnerships identified with MDG 8.

No hints! Think again. One of the partnerships we discussed is the so-called "African Peer Review Mechanism" (APRM), and what an eye-opener it was.

The world is used to thinking of Africa as the poor, as the underdeveloped, as resourced, and there is basis for such perception—most African countries are at the bottom of the country rankings of the Human Development Index (we are about in the middle). And from "out of Africa" has come one scheme that is getting widespread attention and admiration. It has been described by one colleague as a new paradigm for global partnership—a model of what all global partnerships should be like.

What exactly is the APRM? It is a self-assessment instrument by a country on its political, economic and corporate governance, as well as its socio-economic development—but with a difference. First, the country's self-assessment is not done only by the government, but with the widest possible participation of civil society and the private sector. This self-assessment is based on a questionnaire that is almost as exhaustive as one can imagine (questions covering 93 indicators), and it is the logic of a plan of action, again formulated with the participation of all sectors of society.

The country submits the self-assessment and its action plan for review by an outside team overseen by a panel of eminent persons known for their probity, competence and integrity. The panel members are appointed by a committee of the participating heads of state. (The panel includes, three women, one of whom is its chair.) The review team goes to the country, holds wide-ranging consultations with all sectors, writes its own report which is then responded to by the government of the country involved. The report is submitted to the heads of state and government, and is reviewed by them.

Here's the kicker: If the government of the country in question does not do a will to correct its shortcomings, then all the participating governments (it is voluntary, but 25 countries representing 75 percent of the African population, have acceded) provide certain sanctions as it can, including urging donor governments and agencies to give aid. If the government of the country is recalcitrant, peer pressure kicks in, together with a dossier of corrupt [illegible] holds which is more, the country's progress on its action program is periodically reviewed.

A program proudly made by Africans for Africans. And it is working.

Graciousness and civility in US Congress

POLITICAL TIDBITS

Belinda Olivares-Cantiveros

[illegible] President Bush's [illegible] signaled obviously to jack up his sagging popularity, had dinner ordinary citizens who have done exemplary deeds seated in the gallery, next to First Lady Laura Bush. Of the three, the most moving story was that of Chuck Hinerman, conscientious worker Wesley Mouery. He was with his young daughters when a Shia roadside had a nearmiss on a New York subway platform and fell on to the train tracks. As a train approached, Mouery jumped in and lay on top of the stricken, pressing him into a four-deep space or keeping him from being hit by the train. Five searches had run over the platform but he was unscathed to a man, just inches above Mouery's head, very loving gesture on his part esp. Bush said that if America can produce such heroes, there is no reason to be concerned about the future. The 110 Congress rose to its feet in prolonged applause.

* * *

Me in the Philippines are not looking to succeed. In fact, as I listened to that story about Mouery I recalled what the late, much-loved Sen. Richie Pecson, dad to Pimme Peña, Candace, a decade ago. Before sought at a skills training school for poor Cambodians. One day, he came in and saw a trained student starting to throw a grenade inside the classroom. Pecson climbed the pit and dived to the other to cut out of the room. The grenade blew up and hit his body to shreds, though the students was unharmed. A memorial was built to honor his heroism in the city's grandest park. Sen. Pecson says for a paragraph or two in the local papers, few heard about his story. We need to hear our own heroes.

* * *

Dave delGil, Ambassador Mariano Fayson, secretary general of the exclusive organizing committee for the Asian Summit, recommend here the problem of accommodating all the VIPs was masterfully solved despite Gilda's barrage of hostile. A Japanese prime minister had his staff and the media accompanying him took out 250 rooms at the Hilton. Gilda Bonny Bond owned by Manny B. Osmeña. Manny's only stockholder. Indian Electoral Officials of Bonny Bond, Inc. Manny's brother at Marian Orange, Ca., while Indonesian President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono, got the second best suite. Chinese Prime Minister Wen Jiabao, Australian Prime Minister John Howard and New Zealand Prime Minister Helen Clark were all billeted at the Manila Peninsular. Russian President Vladimir Putin was at the Waterfront Hotel in Lahug, together with the foreign minister of Timor Leste and Malaysian Prime Minister Abdullah Badawi. European countries Kitchen Cabinets, Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh was at the Shangri-La, and, as luck, took the least impressive suite at the Ritz Royal of the Marriott. Shangri-La, which was overbooked, got a suite. Security was a problem during the Summit, but as Bayan pointed out, it was but good fortune to work with retired Gen. Leo Alem (they both served under President Fidel Ramos and sometimes shared an office story).

* * *

Tagaig Rep. Alan Peter Cayetano obviously wanted to prolong the House in his committee hearings (it was giving him all the mileage he can because of his campaign?) But I was also told that he was just "exact-Bulong," as First Gentleman Mike Arroyo's lawyer put it. The Mouth took where he said the Senator invited an account that already said officially that he could be a senator realm. Cayetano without a shred of evidence, he shifted to another tack. Arroyo should sign a waiver to allow scrutiny of his other accounts elsewhere in the world. There is a sense of history in this. Ferdinand Marcos's family did not, and while many may not be fond of Mike Arroyo, they know that crime is being ordered to Cayetano's unfounded accusation. I don't know why the entire committee could no longer continue its hearings, and now comes this bombshell which is used a few months' committee to look into the veracity of the alleged Munich account. The public does not be fooled.

Fading memories

IN A FEW MONTHS, I'LL BE TURNING 26, EXACTLY TEN some age when my boss died of lung cancer. I was only 11 years old then, and at that innocent age, 26 seemed, well, old. Not exactly old enough to die, but old enough to have done whatever you wanted to do in your life. After all, you've already lived a quarter of a century. But now that I'm approaching that age, I realize that 26 is way too early to have to deal with your mortality.

Sadly, 12 years of [illegible] on his death, I already [illegible] that my memories [illegible] of him are beginning to fade. I am [illegible] to work, [illegible] and husband to be, but that's the way it is. Apparently, seeing a person every day for 12 years is not enough to [illegible] that you would remember how he looks like when he's gone. It's scary for me to even picture my boss of him. He was thankfully [illegible] photographic). I probably would not remember his face now.

Then I don't remember some things about him. For one, I recall that he had an acne problem when he was younger. He would pound pesos like nobody's business when he was younger. He was a spendthrift kind of guy for his time (I think it was called thicks or something). I don't know if I remember the pesos-filled or the many business I attended with my Uncle Ray and other brother, who is a year younger than him. But strangely enough, I distinctly remember the acne itself, those flaming red spots all over his face.

I remember that he had a curious way of rapping my shins when he was feeling affectionate. My favorite picture of us together was taken when he was already bed-ridden and in his pajamas. It shows me wearing my favorite red shirt and being beside him, and he is smiling a little and rapping my shin.

Rapa Nui was a conscious reader. He would underline or highlight words that he didn't understand so that he could look it up in a dictionary later on. He was obsessively concerned about correct grammar and spelling and pronunciation. Once he pounced and caught a misused preposition from a photograph taken by my sister and me.

Death is a mystery to me. I mean, in its meaning and its proper use. I think he scanned the dictionary and referred to reviewing words to learn. He began with A. He learned the meanings of "alight," and "aureus," and "adverse," and "altogether," and other interesting A words. I think we finished C, but we kept on going. I was in my early teens. The Big C is not a apologize. It's worse: it's the dire handed, traitorous disease. I'd love to adopt it using words beginning with C.

I remember that he was a skilful writer as well. He would always revising news articles and opinion columns for the newsletters he produced for our workers. After he got sick, he wrote opinion pieces to churches asking for patients, and personal letters to his doctors.

On his last night alive, I went home with a copy of the UP inaugural School high school newspaper, where a piece I had written was published—the only grade-school contribution in the entire paper. I showed it to him in his hospital room and looked at him, for he was breathing out of an oxygen mask, said he seemed to be asleep, so I didn't tell him I got "published." But my parents were there, and I told them, and were as I remember the moment, I hope he heard what I said.

Months if I knew that that would be the last time I'd see him alive. I would have done things a little differently. Maybe I wouldn't have been so proud of myself because getting a poem published isn't nearly as important as losing a brother. Or maybe I would have wondered him to tell him about the poem, because he was a writer as well, and he would have been proud of me for that. Or maybe I would never even have mentioned the poem altogether and I would have just gone to him and doubled him for encouraging me to read and for teaching me grammar, and setting an example of what hard work means. Or maybe I would have said good-bye and kissed him and told him I loved him, and that he didn't need to worry about anything, that I would look after my sister and me, because we would be OK, and that we would see him again somewhere in heaven.

It was a blessing that all this happened when I was only 11, because at that age you don't really understand much of today's adult world. You don't worry about it. You don't even care and notice you about going through another death in the family. Because death means you'll never see a person again, and you'll never be able to talk to him again. But even I realize that sometime gradually fade over time, but feelings never do.

It seems unfair to me to write about Rapa Nui, and some of my memories of him, when I have another brother who died two years before I was born). Imagine there was only six years old when he died of hemorrhagic fever from days before Christmas. I'm not sure for less than a week, as his death came on a total shock. I was not even born.

I'm sure Kuya Rene was thrilled when he saw our Kuya entering the gates of heaven. I've always pictured him running toward the familiar face and hugging at Rene's hand to show him around. Then he takes Rapa to go see Jesus and all the apostles and introduces him to everybody. I imagine Rapa working due manners because they are face-to-face with their Savior, their Master and their Maker.

Renante Glory R. Dominguez, 25, is a 4th Economics graduate of the University of the Philippines in Diliman and now works at Hongkong Shanghai Banking Corp. in Makati.

NOTICE TO YOUNGBLOOD CONTRIBUTORS:

Send your contributions by e-mail to youngblood@inquirer.com.ph, together with your address, age and the school/course and year you're studying (or the company you work with). Unfortunately, we cannot return any manuscripts, so please keep a copy of the one you're submitting and the computer you won't edit. Contributions to Youngblood should not have been previously published.

YOUNG BLOOD

Renette Glory R. Dominguez

We want to know what the young are thinking about. What are their thoughts on current issues? We welcome contributions from the twenty-something individual. —Ed.

The simple life

HIGH BLOOD

Cecilia Tobias Lopez

[illegible] also like to hear the concerns of the single-parenting set above, what makes their blood pressure rise or makes them sit back, content that all's well with their world and with themselves. —Ed.

MOST OF MY CHILDHOOD WAS SPENT IN Mindanao. My family first lived in a lumber concession in Davao. When the Japanese invaded the Philippines, we joined my father's oldest sister and her family in Catabato. As a bride, my aunt had settled with her husband in a little town quaintly named Pagalungan.

Toward the end of the war, my father decided to bring his family back to Manila in answer to his father's summons. However, we got stranded in Cotabato. Instead of the trip for the liberation of Manila reached here pack.

Not too long after our return to Manila, my father stopped his family back to Catabato as he would not afford to support us on his small salary.

My friend in a rather remarkable hint about myself by my aunt's husband. An agriculturist, he had the farm planted to modern standards of sugar that were unbelievably sweet, seedless, delicious, and provided the best duck, golden. Both the sun and rich in many. Rice and corn were the main crops of the farm, but the orchard trees and vegetables were the delicacies of Manila washed

Between Scylla and Charybdis

FROM "GREEK MYTHOLOGY," one may recall the way monsters Scylla and Charybdis hang each other from each side of the south of Messina between Italy and Sicily. Scylla was a woman with six heads and 12 feet that looked like those of dogs. Fellow monster Charybdis was a whirlpool maker. Hapless sailors fell victims to either one of them.

If we were to believe the illegitimacy and unfulfillment of the Arroyo presidency and the possible removal of this from the Constitution, then we would indeed be in some dire straits. We would be between Scylla and Charybdis, so to speak. But if they are the only choices the electorate would have, who should we vote for?

The Makati Business Club (MBC), a country exile of the Arroyo administration, seems to get a sense of the political horizon by saying: "Many things seem to be looking good, such as what we have seen with the economy joining unrushed growth and the financial markets reading with a very bullish note, there is a tendency to brush aside issues of governance and accountability. But fear of unsettling the situation and derailing the economy's financial markets' positive momentum."

The MBC, it appears, fears that the business sector would ignore the dirt's call for "greater reforms in governance" in the face of the recent positive developments in the economy that are difficult to mess up with, even with the appointment's order commute. But such gains have not trickled down to the people.

The business Philippine elections should prove to be a hindrance to the economic gains that the administration and the opposition. Would the election give rise to the legitimacy issue given the economic variety Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo's presidency is making, or would the voters risk unraveling every thing regardless of the fact that their stakes with the Stock Exchange? This question is probably the reason why the likes of Senators Manny Villar, Joseph Estrada and Joker Arroyo are "running" on the idea of a "Tie of Peace."

We need to share a future that bypasses the stock between Scylla and Charybdis. So help us, God.

—ALEXANDER BATALLA
34 D. Tuazon St., BF Homes II, Paranaque City

Why the priests' silence on Bersamin's killing?

I AM A CONCERNED PARISH-ioner of Mt. Carmel Church where Rep. Luis Bersamin is now assassinated.

Why is it that up to now the parish of Mt. Carmel Church, or the Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines, or the parishioners have not raised their voices about the incident, demanding from Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo and the police authorities to live up to their oath to protect the citizens?

The Church is supposed to be a sacred and safe sanctuary for all people. Why are the people, even the ex-governor, suppressed in the guardianship of his souls, silent on the killing? Are they so afraid?

There silence is confusing. That's why GMA and her corrupt officials are not ashamed of their greedy and plunderous ways.

I am shocked, appalled and ashamed to see the parishioners of Mt. Carmel Church who belong to the families of the mighty in silence. The consent to crimes by the lukewarm.

—MANUEL KEETER
New Manila, Quezon City
mkeeter4@hotmail.com

LETTERS

Advertising RP as global wimp

WHAT'S THAT SATURDAY Letter Cpl. Daniel Smith to US society just because the American government threatened to cancel the $50 U.S. grant military assistance? Has the Arroyo administration lost all sense of self-respect, dignity and honor?

From the beginning, it has shown nothing but hostility to Filipino victims. The Philippine embassy even went overboard by portraying the victim as a "Tito" bragging to her family. Worse, it is the Arroyo administration who is really is kneeling over and licking the American boots shoes.

I will not be surprised if this arrogant thing of Smith's to US nobody becomes a spokesman for other actions on how to treat the Philippine government in the future.

The Arroyo administration seems to sell it advertising that the Philippines can be bombarded, tortured and abashed in every possible way. Just watch how Gloria will always demand the immediate release of her citizens caught poaching in Taiwan. (Yapacing)

—CESAR CHAVEZ
cesarchavez@hotmail.com

Questions re Janjalani interview

THIS IS A REACTION TO UCCP-ite Bisamya's interview with Hanafiy Janjalani. (PDI, 1/22/07)

According to Bisamya in professor of Mindanao State University (MSU) Sulu, in the February 2000 interview with Janjalani, the latter told him that "they received from me and Ramzi Yousef P6 million in exchange for sending volunteers to Afghanistan." That is a complement false. May coffee same chocolate?

1. It is common knowledge that the Soviet Union left Afghanistan in 1989, the year the Abu Sayyaf broke into the scene in the Philippines. It remains that the jihad was already over in Afghanistan. The conflict in Afghanistan became a civil war that pitted the Afghan against each other.

Osama bin Laden himself had left Afghanistan and gone back to Saudi Arabia. He failed, went to Sudan in 1991 and remained only to Afghanistan in 2000 or three, after 1 left Afghanistan in 1996. (Bisamya's interview with him, and we have been apart from each other ever since then. In 2000, I was in Saudi, not in the Philippines, and in case somebody has forgotten, Ramzi was by then already in US custody (in what volunteers was Bisamya talking about? To whom could Ramzi send them?

2. If Janjalani were nine years, he should be around 33 years old. That means he was only 14 years old in 1989, about the time he is hopefully received money from Bisamya. Or even if it was already 1992, he would only have been in his teens, not yet twenty. Does this make any sense?

3. Bisamya, who was conducting a research about the Abu Sayyaf, says that Janjalani is "highly educated." Who, what did he not say? How can we take verily the validity of that claim, considering that most of the people he associated with? Or I should add, not including—as we have seen—his wide infidelities information can make me and/or she is more informed.

4. Is Bisamya aware of the official letter I sent to President Macapagal-Arroyo on May 2, 2000, where I offered my help and assistance to the government of the Philippines? If not, I advise him to read it. I can provide him a copy of the letter.

5. I have never given any money to Abu Sayyaf. I have no plans, and certainly have no the Abu Sayyaf.

6. Back regard to Ramzi, it has already been proven in US and Australian law—not just before the media, as I did—that I have no relationship with him.

—ISMAIL RUSLER,
khalifa_ismail@yahoo.com

Time for another snap presidential election

AS THE AT THE BUREAU OF IMMIGRATION (BI) is researched, we are back under martial law. As shown in the case of Fr. Pernil Holly the Bureau has appropriated again for itself the authority to deport foreigners, using the (Dirty) tricks of the Marcos regime. Father Holly, a Columban priest, did the country a great service by disclosing a number of Parliament of the United Kingdom (UK) parliamentarians' doings done by big-scale mining around the country. When Father Holly came back to the Philippines he voted to the parishioners had served as a missionary, he was told that his name was in the black list of undesirable aliens, and was never dreaming he was unceremoniously put on the next boat to Hong Kong.

This is exactly what happened to me 24 years ago, when Marcos declared martial law. The Official basis "to kept rid" "Bureau of Immigration and Deportation. Edmundo Reyes, the immigration commissioner that time, advised me to leave the country voluntarily or I had to suspend the Marcos regime for defending the rights of the workers during strike in an electric company in Mindanao. Reyes promised me that I could come back after six months. To that effect, he issued me a twenty-year visitor's, however, turned out to be fake and invalid. Upon my arrival at the Manila International Airport—after a six month holiday—I was shown a list of undesirable aliens and my name appeared there. Right away I was subjected to a plane bound for Hong Kong, it took my superior and some Catholic bishops' six months to persuade Reyes to allow me to enter the country again—but this time, as a tourist.

For the Arroyo administration, foreigners are nuisance in the country as long as they bring in dollars to invest in the Philippines or to advance to charitable projects. But if they are critical of the government or fight for the rights of the poor, they are not called undesirable aliens. It reminds me of what the late Bishop Leon Fielder Cassera once said: "When I gave food to the poor they called me a saint, but when I asked why are the poor poor they called me a communist."

Is the looming season for "communism" is upon again. It is time to call for another snap election.

—HONOR SANTOS,
PO Box 227 ,
Cagayan de Oro City

Rotary dared: Honor honest people

HOW I WISH I COULD SUE SECURITY guard Carmjo Bacod a 27- year-old "charitable guard (earns P600,000)." PDI, 12/20/06) for his exemplary deed. Then I wish (again) our political leaders were how we like him.

To give fitting honors to honest people like Bacod, I would like to suggest that we put up a track greatest wall possible at the camera which the names of honest people like Bacod could be inscribed for everybody to see, so that their good example would be imitated by our people.

Humility, this project could be spearheaded by the Rotary.

—FELIX M. MUÑOZ,
Mills Court, Molavalley,
Marikina City 1800

Republic of the Philippines
NATIONAL FOOD AUTHORITY
Regional Office No. V
Rawis, Legazpi City

INVITATION TO APPLY FOR ELIGIBILITY AND TO BID

	Project	Location	Brief Description	Approved Budget for the Contract (ABC)	Calendar days for Completion
1.0.7	Regular Warehouse (Metro Manila)	Metro Manila (Capacity 5 kg)	For bidding purposes, the capacity is 5 kg. Additional details	4,000,000.00	120
1.0.7	For the construction of one (1) unit Regular Warehouse (Capacity 5 kg) with Administrative Office	Metro Manila	Construction of one (1) unit Regular Warehouse (Capacity 5 kg) with Administrative Office	3,000,000.00	120
1.0.7	Regular Warehouse (Metro Manila)	Metro Manila (Capacity 5 kg)	For bidding purposes, the capacity is 5 kg. Additional details	3,000,000.00	120

	ACTIVITIES	DATE	TIME
1.	Posting of Invitation to Apply for Eligibility and to Bid	January 15, 2007 to February 5, 2007	8:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m.
2.	Issuance of Bidding Documents	January 15, 2007 to February 5, 2007	8:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m.
3.	Deadline for submission of Eligibility Requirements	February 5, 2007	5:00 p.m.
4.	Bidding Conference (Eligibility Phase)	February 6, 2007	8:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m.
5.	Evaluation of Eligibility Requirements	February 6, 2007 to February 12, 2007	8:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m.
6.	Post-Qualification	February 13, 2007 to February 19, 2007	8:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m.
7.	Issuance of Bid Documents	February 13, 2007 to February 19, 2007	8:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m.
8.	Pre-bid Conference	February 20, 2007	10:00 a.m.
9.	Submission and Opening of Bids	February 21, 2007	until 10:00 a.m.
10.	Opening of Bids	February 21, 2007	10:00 a.m.

A human rights group championing terrorists

AN ACTIVIST GROUP NAMED CELLS (THEY focus on the Global South, is demanding a probe on the alleged engagement of US troops in the hunt for the executioner of Qaida-linked terrorists and Abu Sayyaf bandits in Jolo.

We, of course, know that after 911 special Forces have been training our Filipino soldiers to the art of (over) combat against guerilla/terrorist elements. This is done right inside the landmines where the real threats exist. What and where could be a better training ground than Jolo?

The activist group appears to be more concerned with the plight of the terrorists. But it should not expect our troops to superimpose combat unnecessarily like what they would get from disservices marches. Our troops are fighting a vicious group that doesn't even observe the humble variables. It is just appropriate that they should be trained under conditions that would better equip them with skills, will and vigor to do battle even in the enemy's territory.

Whatever the outcome of the Jolo battles, we will always be realized not only by al Qaida but also by the donors. It is foolhardy to think that these executioners will not suffer in their targets when they have the opportunity to in also that. It is to hope that we are not in the process of creating or doing a humanitarian job will not strike back if threatened by enemy fire. But we have not yet heard of that happening in Sulu. Moreover, if it will happen at all, we cannot fault an American soldier for fighting back. When one is confronted with a deadly threat to his life, any weapon used allow the enemy to display his/her/its any variety imply. Either one faces that reality or he is one of his who is believe that a committed executioner will not smuggle terror-kingdom some.

Either the US is a legal accomplice of Osama al-Qaida and the Abu Sayyaf or it is plainly ignorant of how these groups operate. It is not, therefore, surprising to see and hear militants preaching to human rights activities while exposing the Balikatan exercises and the presence of American troops in the country as illegal and detrimental to the efforts to eliminate the right of terrorists might to be listed under the same category as the "enemy of the state."

—EDGAR HARA,
edgahara1960@yahoo.com

INQUIRER Visayas

E-mail: iny_cebu@inquirer.com.ph
Website: www.inquirer.net/region

Editor: Jun Bandayrel
Bureau Chief: Rosalyn L. Reyes

Two grandmas lead way for environment

By Ma. Elena Labuto
Iloilo City

TWO GRANDMOTHERS HAVE MADE ILOILO set, literally, and listen to conversations on how to care for the environment.

Aurora Alona Lim and Lucy dela Fuente are the main hosts of EcoForum, a cable television talk show aired every Thursday, at 6-7 p.m., over the Central Philippine University (CPU) station Channel. Another host is Jessel Millan, an engineer working at the CPU.

The talk show, rounded soon towards the Philippines through the CPU webcast, is the only one of its kind. It has been running in the last 18 months, short enough to not grab local ratings but long enough to be regarded as the community's conscience.

Lim and De la Fuente said they started the environment-oriented show because they refused the excuse of politicians and business people that future should be sacrificed for progress.

The show was also an offshoot of their environmental activism against the proposal to build coal-fired power plants in Iloilo, the subject of critical watersheds and air pollution in Iloilo City. They found their voice and, now, a growing audience who share their mission to make communities safe, healthy and green.

A long way

The program has come a long way from being a voice in the wilderness since it was launched in June 2005 by the CPU Environmental Concerns Office. Today environment watch groups, farmers, physicians, professors and students want to be guests or to be interviewed in the show.

Lim said that, sometimes, she and her co-host had to turn down requests for guesting, that if to turn huge immediate attention, like the oil spill in Guimaras, they would always find a way to discuss it.

A week after the Aug. 11 spill caused by the sinking of the MV Solar 1 carrying bunker fuel off Barrio, Southwestern island Motherly Provincial Guimaras, Forum Women Veterans to talk about it. In succeeding months, the show spent two out of four monthly episodes on oil spill updates.

The show also discussed wildlife conservation, Christian ecology, renewable energy alternative medicine, HIV/AIDS, genetic engineering, reproductive health, climate and lifestyle, media and eyes, tsunami, organic farming, geological hazards and building standards.

In October last year, it had Dr. Rose Edward Carpenter, an American ethnologist, marine biologist and marine conservationist, who said the Turtle Island Passage between Sinaugan and Sibaliw has been the greatest concentration of marine species, making it the center of biodiversity in the whole world.

No guest shortage

"We tackled various topics because there is no shortage of experts and guests," said Lim, the producer. "They also like our format which is conversational and puts the guests at ease."

Lim and De la Fuente said they had no experience in hosting a cable TV talk show. It took them three episodes before they became comfortable in front of the camera, which was then handled by students who straddles the shows their laboratory.

"We focused more on the issue of the issues and make do with limited studio equipment. Sometimes, the camera banged or the lights were defective, but the show went on," said De la Fuente.

As hosts, they are not neutral, Lim said. "We are advocates for the environment and we are passionate about it. We like viewers to take us seriously because we have something to tell them."

The hosts avoid inviting politicians because they don't want to be associated with any political groups. They want it to remain a talk show of experts, environmental advocates and non-government organizations, that give intelligent discussions to environment issues.

LUCY de la Fuente and Aurora Lim host the environment talk show "EcoForum" on a cable television channel in Iloilo City.

Background

A grandmother of two girls, Lim, 63, is the special assistant on environmental concerns to CPU President Anselmo Aumentado. She is a registered chemical engineer. She finished her Bachelor of Science in Chemical Engineering, cum laude, at the CPU and earned her Master of Arts in Mathematics at the Ohio State University.

She received a study grant on chemical and environmental engineering at the Michigan Technological University in Houghton, Michigan, and a postgraduate diploma in environmental science and technology in Delft, Netherlands. The diploma was accredited by the Commission on Higher Education as Master of Science in Environmental Science and Technology.

She teaches environmental management and has held various positions in the university. She still finds time to be active with the Responsible Strategies for Sustainable Energy (Rise), an environment watch group that protests plans to build coal-fired power plants.

She is married to Jesus Lim and they have two children, all engineers.

Retired teacher

De La Fuente, 73, is retired; but she is "still in the think of things." She is a teacher, radio journalist, human rights advocate and speaker on various subjects.

She spent 25 years as a faculty adviser of English majors and campus journalists in the CPU, for a decade's and speech teacher, she organized the Theater CPU and holds a theater festival every year. She is said to be a seasoned interviewer of the Miss CPU beauty pageant and, later, the Ms CPU for 16 years.

She earned her Bachelor of Theology in 1966, cum laude, at the CPU, and of Arts in English, also at the CPU.

De La Fuente are as a board trustee of the Hiland Christian College in Capiz from 1977 to 1980, and as a member and officer of various Baptist associations and organizations.

In July last year, the Jose Cultural and Heritage Tourism Foundation recognized her and her husband, Johnny de la Fuente, as "Outstanding Family Couple." They have six children, nine grandchildren and three great grandchildren.

Holistic view

Lim and De la Fuente's view on environment is holistic, not just the biophysical world. Thus, the talk show discusses family planning, HIV/AIDS and healthy lifestyle. They also work with groups like the green Islam, recycling clubs and mountaineers, composed mostly of young people.

"We are now on the twilight years and hope is with the young people. There's hope if we reach to them," said De la Fuente.

Lim said nothing would slow them down. "We think lots of ourselves and more of others like our family and society after God, in fact, I forget that I am are young anymore until my arthritis hurts."

GONE TOO SOON

We, the members of Batch 90 of Saint Jude Catholic School, would like to extend our most heartfelt condolences to the family of Lester Mancilla, who joined our creator last 21 January 2007.His life was a gift from God and equally as precious as each of our lives.

Lester has left a big gaping hole in the hearts of his family & his friends, and an even greater impact on the business community. A young vibrant man at only 34 years, Lester showed big promise and potential as he was just gearing up and flexing his muscles and could very well be a big asset and contribute much to this society, to this country. Unfortunately, his life was cut short so soon, and this is indeed a big blow and a big big loss to his family, his friends, to this society.

Lester, as we walk with you today on your final trip, we will miss you terribly. We pray that you rest in peace, our schoolmate, our batchmate, our beloved friend.

We believe that in time, justice will be served in the eyes of man, and in the eyes of God.

Farewell, Lester.

Across the NATION

Envoy says US winning hearts in Sulu

MAIMBUNG, SULU—A RANKING US GOVERNment official said military exercises between the US and Philippine governments were aimed at wooing the people of this Muslim-dominated province to the cause of peace and good relations with the United States.

Kent Hughes, US state undersecretary for public diplomacy and public affairs, said the exercises, including the «Balikatan» Balikatan 2007», overall about strengthening partnerships and relationships with the people of Sulu.

Hughes is the highest ranking Washington official to have visited Sulu.

Dealing her visit here on Thursday, Hughes, a former television news reporter, said the US government aims to build better relationship with the locals.

Damage are traditionally not to knot about atrocities because of the Dad Under statement in the 1900s, when hundreds of their relatives were killed by American hands.

"We are very committed to helping the people, in partnering with the local government, the local communities to achieve better lives, especially in education, health and economic development, because prosperous communities are more peaceful communities," Hughes told reporters here.

She said with the development efforts the US is also helping ends the Philippine military roles are making down "terrorists' who are threatening the people of the Philippines."

But she quickly added that US troops here are just advising and training Filipino troops.

"Our troops are not engaged in any combat operations," she said.

US ambassador Richie Kenney said US troops would only be providing training particularly on the evacuation of wounded people or soldiers during the next fieldtraining.

The said media from visiting Filipino soldiers, US forces here would also be heavily involved in more development works.

"The cool local that year to provide people, merely humanitarian, because there are great people down here. They are friendly, talented, and very creative and we are looking for ways to help them realize that," Kenney said.

As in the efforts of the military against the Abu Sayyaf and their allies from the Jemaah Islamiyah, Kenney said the US has fully recognized these.

"They are doing a fabulous job. (Many Filipino) soldiers lost their lives and if the Philippine military is executing extra ordinary missions. I think they are wonderful," Kenney said.

But elsewhere in Mindanao, the violence continues.

US SOLDIERS won't take any chances in join during the visit of State Undersecretary Karen Hughes and US Ambassador Kristie Kenney to US-funded projects in the province.

In Sultan Kudarat, Sharif Kabuntalan, a newly created province, a rumbling Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) leader was wounded in an ambush by two motorcycle-riding gunmen.

Police said Adar Ambolo had just left the MILF's district office in Crossing Dimaro, where he attended a conference with other Moro officials, when the ambush took place.

He was heading for the city ahead him car when attacked by the gunmen.

The MILF said Adiao, a senior rebel official, was called to the Coordinating Committee on Cessation of Hostilities (CCCH) in Cotabato City when he was ambushed.

Ed Sabala, MILF spokesperson, said although Adiao was wounded, he has survived the attack.

Adiao, also known as Mustafa, is a resident of Indanan in Sulu in Maguindanao and is a close aide of MILF chair Murad Ebrahim.

A source from the military said the perpetrators might have been members of a radical MILF faction.

The source, who requested anonymity, said Adiao was among the «moderate» MILF leaders.

"He (Adiao) has been in the forefront of containing troops, abusive rebel commanders in his unit. It could be possible that these abusive commanders were behind the attempt against his life." the source, an Army intelligence officer, said. *Alipala with a report from Jaime Fernandez, Inquirer Mindanao*

CEBU PACIFIC AIR.COM

SEAT SALE

₱999 Cebu - Singapore
Davao - Singapore (via Cebu)
Selling period: January 24 to February 4, 2007
Travel period: February 6 to April 30, 2007

LOWEST YEAR-ROUND GO FARES

₱288 Manila - Laoag or Legaspi
Cebu - Bacolod

₱568 Cebu - Clark, Iloilo, Davao or Zamboanga
Davao - Zamboanga
Manila - Bacolod/Dumaguete, Iloilo, Kalibo (for Boracay!) or Roxas

₱688 Manila - Cebu, Puerto Princesa, Tacloban or Tagbilaran

₱998 Manila - Butuan, Cagayan de Oro, Coralbato, Davao, Dipolog, General Santos or Zamboanga

₱1,499 Manila - Kuala Lumpur

₱1,999 Cebu - Hong Kong
Manila - Hong Kong

₱2,499 Davao - Hong Kong (via Cebu)
Manila - Singapore

₱2,999 Manila - Bangkok
Manila - Jakarta (non-stop)
starting January 31, 2007

MOST DOMESTIC DESTINATIONS • MOST DOMESTIC FLIGHTS
MOST DOMESTIC ROUTES • NEWEST PLANES

Call (02)70-20-888
or visit the Travel Agent nearest you.

CEBU PACIFIC

Defensor starts courting votes in Marcos country

By Cristina Arradon
Inquirer Northern Luzon

LIOAG CITY—PRESIDENTIAL CHIEF OF staff Michael Defensor, a former leftist activist, said he welcomes the possibility of this story of the children of former dictators Ferdinand Marcos in a unity ticket under the administration of President Macapagal-Arroyo.

Defensor said reconciling with Sets 1, 2 and 3 forces is one of the Arroyo administration's 10-point agenda after she won in the 2004 presidential election.

He said representing a unity slate for the administration after declaring his intentions to run for senator this year, a move that observers noted would strengthen his bid.

"I see no problem with accommodating the Marcos children in the unity ticket. I know that [the Marcos children] are open about this," Defensor said during his visit here on Thursday.

He said he also welcomed the idea of negotiating with the Marcos family to put a closure to the decades-old issue of the family's ill-gotten wealth.

"I was 15 years old when [the Marcos wealth issue started]. I am already 37 with four children. I hope this will be over before I will have my grandchildren," he said.

"I've always taken the stand that it's about time that we settle the Marcos wealth issue [through a compromise agreement.] I will not guarantee the return on the money can trickle down to the Filipinos," he said.

Defensor on Thursday attended the Swiss celebration of Solsticio town. He also stopped by to say hello to Vicente Fariñas, vice-mayor of Laoag. Mayor Michael Fariñas, was the earliest local in the so-called Marcos country to court the Ilocano vote.

Defensor, however, said no meeting has been formally set with the Marcoses to discuss the possible political alliances in May.

The Marcos siblings were not available for comment on Thursday as they were out of the province.

Defensor said it was former First Lady Imelda Marcos who advised him to "follow the path of reconciliation" when they met in the province.

PHINMA PROPERTIES
The developer of the best value-for-money condos in the country now brings you...

A Spanish-inspired enclave amidst lush greenery...
San Antonio Garden Villas
still on a gently sloping property along Commonwealth Avenue, Q.C.

Avail of pre-selling prices for as low as ₱623,112/unit

813-PHNC (7742) • 0917-813-PHNC (7742)

DAR, group blame each other for deadly clash

By Carlo P. Gomez
Inquirer Visayas

BACOLOD CITY—AGRARIAN REform Secretary Nasser Pangandaman yesterday blamed the Task Force Mapalad (TFM) for the violence that erupted in Hacienda Nike Molugo, resulting in the death of a farmer-beneficiary and injuries to four others.

"I am pointing to Task Force Mapalad for instigating this crisis," he told Radio Veritas, adding that the TFM provoked the violence by refusing to fulfill his promise to install Cleto Rafael Gumay of Land Ownership Award-holders Inc to the position.

TFM spokesperson Edna Estevanez said:

But Pangandaman said there are ongoing negotiations being conducted by his office between the landowners Bob Cuenca and TFM farmer Christine Montero.

However, he noted that the farmer-beneficiaries occupied a portion of the hacienda on Wednesday without the presence of the Department of Agrarian Reform and the other stakeholders.

In avoid bloodshed, Pangandaman said he would need time to talk with the parties involved to ensure the peaceful installation of beneficiaries.

Landowner Bob Cuenca is not against the implementation of agrarian reform but he opposed the awarding of 100 to those who were not actual tillers of the land, Pangandaman said.

The identification by DAR of the rightful beneficiaries has yet to be completed when the TFM members occupied some portion of the hacienda, he said.

Pangandaman said the police investigation is still ongoing to determine the identity of the people behind the deadly clash.

"The TFM leaders cannot, however, escape responsibility over this and developments. If only its leaders abided by our earlier agreements not to force the issue, this would not have happened," Pangandaman said.

The DAR chief had said that the TFM acted in "bad faith" when it resigned on a standing dispute over the controversial sugarcane plantation in Hacienda Nike.

"I warned us to be transparent on the whole process," he said.

Pangandaman also denied TFM's allegations that he is not acting on the petitions to install the farmer-beneficiaries on the disputed property.

Pangandaman said he has asked the DAR regional director and the PNP to investigate the matter.

Senior Supt. Rolando Espino, Negros Occidental police director, said he had placed a police outpost at the farm to keep the peace.

The TFM and another group that staked their claim on the Cuenca property clashed and guns were fired.

The government has not sought sentence from some landowners who refuse to turn over their estates, mostly sugar plantations, once the land reform coverage.

Citing of the Comprehensive Agrarian Reform Program, that was started under the administration of former President Corazon Aquino, said that the program was doomed from the start.

A POLICE tank was deployed on the provincial capitol's field as the height of a police assault to enforce a suspension order on Gov. Nini Tupas.

Evidence enough on cops' excesses, says Drilon

By Maurice P. Burgos Jr.
Inquirer Visayas

ILOILO CITY—SEN. FRANKLIN Drilon, chair of the Senate committee on public order and illegal drugs, said the committee has enough evidence to show excesses in the police assault on the Bar. Tupas rebellion case.

Drilon, who chaired the provincial capitol here yesterday, said the Senate committee hearing held Thursday has secured the necessary testimony and data, despite the absence of key officials, including Chiefsupt. Marcelino Gutierrez and Jun. Gen. Jacinto Ligot, retired.

Drilon, a close ally of Iloilo Gov. Niel Tupas Sr., said they would include in their report a statement that the assault team "used excessive force" in trying to implement the dismissal order of the Ombudsman against Tupas.

"I think that (Ombudsman Simeon) has already been established even before the hearing," said Drilon.

The report would also point out that the night-long "wars in grave violation of the rules of engagement which was confirmed by no less than General Duky himself."

Chief Supt. Wilfredo Duky Sr., Western Visayas police director, was the ground commander of the 203 policemen, including 60 members of the Regional Mobile Group that assaulted the capitol on Jan. 17.

Drilon said the "rules of engagement expressly provide that there should be maximum tolerance and that the long firearms should be used only in extremely justifiable circumstances."

"In the siege there is certainly no justification for it," Drilon said.

Drilon said that the order to dismiss Tupas and other local elective officials has no legal basis.

"The Ombudsman has no jurisdiction and power to dismiss local elective officials because that is reserved, under Section 60 of the Local Government Code, to the courts," Drilon said.

The committee would also submit recommendations to prevent the occurrence of similar incident.

Drilon refused to say if the panel would include the filing of charges against those involved, saying this might preempt their report.

The committee finding is contrary to the report of the police fact-finding committee that absolved all those involved in the operation.

The fact-finding committee, led by Sr. Supt. Ebenezer de Ocampo, director of the Criminal Investigation and Detection Group, even recommended that all the police men who took part in the operation be commended for a successful operation.

ROUNDUP

Police nab alleged gunrunner

CAMP VICENTE LIM, Laguna—Members of the police Criminal Investigation and Detection Group (CIDG) arrested a suspected gunrunner in a raid at the suspect's house in Cabuyao, Laguna on Thursday noon. Senior Supt. Mark Edison Belarmo, CIDG-Calabarzon director, said they searched the house of Jaime "Ka Ojong" Lopez, 58, and recovered three long firearms, five pistols and around 12,000 rounds of ammunition. Belarmo said a source told the police a Toyota Revo used by the suspect was a .45-caliber pistol, an M-16 firearm, rifle and a cache of live ammunition. Belarmo said a case of illegal possession of firearms will be filed against Lopez who is now jailed in Camp Crame.

Marlon Ramos, Inquirer Southern Luzon

Rebels burn equipment

CEBU CITY—Communist rebels burned heavy equipment owned by a private company engaged in silicate processing in Dalaguete, Cebu on Thursday morning, police said. Senior Insp. Ruben Lim, Dalaguete police chief, said the New People's Army (NPA) rebels, led by Commander Kasanyuan, intercepted a bulldozer owned by the company in Barangay Bucalo and set it on fire. He said the company, which he did not identify, had allegedly angered the rebels because of the firm's refusal to pay revolutionary tax.

Jeofrey Maitem, Inquirer Mindanao

BCDA paying Bagulo City

THE BASES Conversion and Development Authority (BCDA) has already remitted a total of P50 million as partial fulfillment of its commitment to assist the Baguio City government in the acquisition of the Baguio Convention Center, pursuant to an agreement between BCDA and city hall. BCDA President Narciso Abaya made the statement in response to an inquiry over why only Baguio received better terms for Camp John Hay Abaya, in the statement, said the payments shipped since the Camp John Hay Development Corporation (CJHDC) declared dividends of P6 billion to the national government. CJHDC is a joint venture between the BCDA and Philippine Tourism Authority (PTA). Under the joint venture, CJHDC is obligated to pay 10 percent of its annual dividends to the national government. Of this 10 percent, 50 percent goes to the BCDA, 30 percent to the PTA and 20 percent to the city government of Baguio. Of the 50 percent share of the BCDA, 50 percent goes to the Philippine Veterans Bank (PVB) and the other 50 percent to the Philippine Veterans Investment Development Corporation (PHILVIDEC). Abaya said the BCDA has already remitted P25 million to the PVB and P25 million to PHILVIDEC.

SPORTS

TITLE CRACK FOR VILORIA

Lab test confirms Niño drug use

Red Bull, TNT forge deadlock

Space, 53 floors up. The Z-Loft.
Selected One Rockwell units at no downpayment or for as low as P16,000 a month.*
Call (02) *16-3048 or (02) 703-0888 or visit the Glass House model unit by the Power Plant Mall.
One Rockwell
East and West Towers

By Mozang R. Castillo

FROM A SLEEPER TO A thriller

Late Sports

More stories on A21 to A24

Aplus METRO
Editor Ester G. Dipasupil
Tell us your hotlines: inquirer.net/name/aplyhotmessage in CCD (Globe) or 243 (Smart) E-mail: yr_metro@inquirer.com.ph

People are talking. Will Estrada finally answer the looming questions? Find out on Page 17

THIS GIANT electronic billboard at the foot of the Guadalupe Bridge is the object of a brewing feud between Public Works and Makati City officials. PHOTO/NIÑO JESUS ORBETA

Court battle looms over ad

Makati officials may face graft raps–DPWH

By Lolit S. Salamero and Vero Quiwonido

A LEGAL BATTLE IS BREWING OVER AN electronic billboard located in a small park at the Guadalupe cloverleaf interchange in Makati City.

The Department of Public Works and Highways (DPWH) is planning to challenge a court injunction that stopped the dismantling of the outdoor advertisement.

The DPWH may also file graft charges against Makati City officials who approved the construction of the electronic billboard. Director Emmanuel Gumapay of the DPWH's National Building Code Development Office said the billboard should not have been allowed to stand "based on a Court of Appeals' ruling that public parks are beyond the conservator of man.

On the other hand, Makati information chief Joey Salgado said yesterday that the city government was prepared to face the DPWH in court and defend the city council's resolution approving an agreement between City Hall and advertising firm Jemah Ads Inc. for the construction of the electronic display. Gumapay said the officials who approved the construction could be charged with violation of the Anti-Graft and Corrupt Practices Act.

At the same time, Public Works Secretary Hermogenes Ebdane Jr. said they were appealing to billboard owners inside public parks to voluntarily dismantle their illegal structures "to avoid inconveniences on their part."

Gumapay said the DPWH would review the council resolution that allowed Jemah Ads Inc. to put up the billboard. As for the preliminary injunction order from a Makati Regional Trial Court, he said the department's legal division was considering challenging the decision. But the DPWH might not go to court if the council would not allow billboards in the park, he added.

The Jemah Ads billboard is in a small park on the southbound lane of Sen. near the Pasig River. The DPWH was supposed to dismantle it Wednesday, but it decided to give Jemah Ads three days to take down the structure voluntarily. Jemah Ads got an injunction halting the dismantling before the DPWH deadline.

Gumapay said yesterday Jemah Ads officials did not honor an agreement to remove the structure. He said the issue was not about an award of contract, but its legality.

He said the appellate court ruled in 2000 that public parks, like public streets, should not be the subject of a lease contract.

"They are violating our patrimony," the DPWH executive said. He said if public parks could be used for business, then public streets might also be used for commerce.

Meanwhile, Ebdane ordered department officials to include public parks in the monitoring of illegal and unsafe billboards.

He said billboards inside parks could also pose a threat to the public.

The seven-day cash ban gives people concern go to public parks, it is important that their safety [illegible] within the vicinity is ensured.

He said DPWH personnel, local building officials and Metro Manila Development Authority personnel would begin checking the structural integrity of billboards and signs in public parks.

Delgado, however, said the main issue was the DPWH's "sudden interest in the electronic billboard in Makati when there are several

COURT, C-3

Pasay City official seeks injunction against his suspension

By Jocelyn R. Uy

FLORENCIO MATEO, SUSPENDED head of the Pasay Traffic and Parking Management Office (PTMO), has filed a petition for a mandatory injunction against the order banning him for holding office for 90 days.

Mateo is now on the 73rd day of his suspension imposed in November by newly installed Mayor Alan Peter Cayetano.

Mateo filed the petition on Wednesday in the Pasay Regional Trial Court.

It was raffled off to the sala of Judge Jesus Mojares Olmach 117.

In his motion, Mateo asked the court to issue an injunction order and to reinstate him to his old post.

He cited Section 60 of the Local Government Code providing that "local chief executives may preventively suspend for a period not exceeding 60 days any subordinate official or employee under his authority pending investigation if the charge against such official or employee involves dishonesty, oppression or grave misconduct..."

Pamaliran, then acting municipal prosecutor, Mateo's suspension on Nov. 15 following complaints from traffic volunteers and regular staff of the PTMO alleging the official failed to release their salaries and incentives.

Charges and countercharges were filed in various courts by the camps of Mateo, an ally of dismissed Pasay Mayor Wenceslao "Peewee" Trinidad, and that of Pamaliran.

"Assuming that I committed a violation, he should have not suspended me for 90 days," Mateo told the Inquirer over the phone yesterday.

"[Clearly,] they intended to bend the rules," he said.

Whether it's the mean exterior or its leather seats that you're looking at, there's so much to admire with the new Ford Escape. This genuine off-roader has a Control Trac II 4x4 system that lets it go where other so-called SUVs can't. And it's even more impressive in action. Put its 2.3L VVT engine with Drive-by-wire technology to the test and be overwhelmed by its lightning quick responsiveness, smooth power delivery and superior fuel efficiency.

For more information, call 8891673.

Ford

Make Every Day Exciting

ford.com.ph

A pilgrimage to India

ON TARGET
ZENNOY TAÑO

I WAS BACK TO FACE WITH A grave when leader Elder Jesus Christ sends a Manila temple in the middle of a desert to India.

It was my seventh day of a 16-day spiritual journey.

The grass was looking down on me and I was looking up to him. I was kneeling before him.

He told me, through an interpreter, not to think while we stayed at each other for several minutes.

Suddenly, I saw a vision.

I saw a hospital room with men and women in white frantically running.

A group of people outside the hospital room looked worried. Some were crying.

Some visions, I saw what looked like a huge office covered with a black cloud, and several pessimistic persons crying.

In that same vision, I also had a glimpse of politicians giving the "high five" sign to one another. I saw people rejoicing in the streams.

Just as suddenly, I was staring at the grass again.

The grass is well-known all over India for having many multivalue in that desert temple each time because a visit.

Like those gurus, he wanders from temple to temple.

Why did I go to that Hindu temple in the middle of a desert in India?

And why did I make that pilgrimage?

I went on that pilgrimage to ask the Hindu gods to ease what, over time I may have that led to any current predicament.

It was a logic or positive (counting or at least) approach which I'm too embarrassed to admit.

Before 1845, I was newly disappointed with Philippine National Police chief Oscar Calderon who refused to give me a permit to carry my gun.

I had asked Commission on Elections Chair Benjamin Abalos to grant me an exemption from the ban prohibiting one from carrying a gun during the election period.

Abalos understands my predicament and promised to give me an exemption.

I remember if Calderon, allegedly a relative of the President, knows that his predecessor, Arturo Lomibao, once gave me and my brother Erwin a medal for tipping off the police about the existence of a few members of Abigail Aragon a few steps from the Nong City Hall.

Calderon should give me a permit since my life is in danger from the drug syndicate that ran the Abu market.

Before taking the trip, I also learned that a secretary of state was about to be named against me for a libel case filed only recently.

Against the background, anyone knows me if I resort to drastic—albeit weird, even unimaginable—measures to solve what I consider a case or my?

I went to about 18 Hindu temples and crawled some 10,000 kilometers with my fellow pilgrims and about 20 Japanese from Tokyo and Osaka.

Most of the Japanese pilgrims were second-timers.

Gauging by the money told by many of them, their wishes were granted by the Hindu gods.

The guru said that whatever I saw or whatever was my desire would come true if I become a complete vegetarian and avoid alcoholic drinks.

I never expected to have that vision.

I hope it doesn't come true.

Row over control of Montalban dump over... for now

By Robert C. Tordesillas Jr.

THE METROPOLITAN MANILA Development Authority has vowed the tension between the Rodriguez municipal government and the third provincial government over the Montalban Solid Waste Disposal Facility.

Earlier, Rodriguez Mayor Democrito Cuenco heralded the dismantling of pipes and other equipment for a methane gas-testing project in the mammoth landfill.

The facility accepts trash from 10 of the 17 cities and towns of Metro Manila.

Invalid testing

The provincial board, which ordered the leveling of the piles of garbage that damaged the equipment, said the testing was invalid as it was not approved by the provincial government.

Board Gov. Casimiro Ynares told the Inquirer that he had advised Cuenco to coordinate the project with the provincial board during a meeting Thursday evening with MMDA officials in Mandaluyong City.

"The fight is already underscoring for our province," Ynares said.

He said that during the dialog, Cuenco agreed to "follow procedures" and have the methane gas exploration proposal to the provincial board.

Ynares also said representatives of foreign investors of the testing project went to his office yesterday afternoon to inquire about requirements for provincial government approval of the project.

Agreement

Cuenco authorized the testing project after entering into an agreement with private firm Members and Eurlon Kredit for the possibility of building a methane gas power plant on the 14-hectare landfill.

But provincial legal officer Edgardo Antonio said only the provincial board was authorized to enter into such agreements.

"We are just asking for some coordination. We should at least show some respect for the provincial government," Antonio also said.

Rehabilitation

The provincial board ends on Wednesday started to lend the landfill as part of an ongoing rehabilitation, damaging the 7-kilometer pipes and other gadgets.

Cuenco said yesterday he would have the pipes fixed but only after reaching an agreement with the provincial government.

NO TO TUITION HIKE
College and high school students from different universities and schools in Metro Manila rally near the Malacañang Palace to express their protest against tuition increase and what they said was the government's lack of concern for the youth and education.

Court battle looms . . .

From page A1

other larger billboards that pose hazards to the public."

He said DPWH should "be fair and consistent" in its campaign, which was premised on the dangers billboards pose to motorists as obvious when bigger typhoon "Milenyo" hit the country in September.

Subjects and there were no complaints against the electronic billboard after Milenyo. "Suddenly they are shifting the issue to the presence of a billboard on government property."

He said the billboard construction was covered by a 2000 council resolution. The resolution also gave the city 5% annual worth of 20-second spots during the billboard's 18 hours of daily operations (6 a.m. to midnight) for public service announcements. "The City Council acted within limits of the law and its authority," said Salgado.

'Minister' nabbed for officiating at fake marriage in City Hall

By Margaux C. Ortiz

THE GROOM WORE A FORMAL JACKET and there was the obligatory pictorial for newlyweds.

But the wedding ceremony turned out to be bogus.

Operatives of the Manila Police District Special Operations Group (SOG) arrested an alleged Protestant minister for performing a fake marriage rites at the Manila City Hall on Tuesday.

Abe Gison, 52, who claims to be a members of Jesus Christ Gospel Ads, Inc. based in Pasay, Quezon City, was nabbed in a room on the fifth floor of the Manila City Hall while accepting marked money from complainant Angela Cruz last Tuesday.

Requirements

An investigation conducted by SPO4 Victorino Rosero, deputy chief of the MPD SOG, showed that Cruz, 20, and her Filipino-American fiance Clemente Fernandez, 62, had gone to City Hall last Dec. 28 to inquire about marriage requirements.

A lady guard introduced the couple to the suspect, who said he could perform a wedding ceremony for the two misdemeanor for a P1,000 fee.

Pitied the victims said they only had P1,000 with them, Gison agreed to accept the remaining balance after a week, and immediately proclaimed a formal jacket for the groom.

After performing the rites, the suspect's secretary, a certain Evangeline, took pictures of the "newly-married" couple.

Both parties agreed to meet after a week for the couple's complete payment and marriage license.

Investigators and Cruz found out that the suspect had duped them when she ran into a friend who worked at the City Hall shortly after the incident who told her that marriage documents were not processed in such a short period of time.

Cruz then sought police assistance. Gison was later arrested inside Room 162 of the Manila City Hall.

Not that easy

"Not only did the suspect overcharge his victims, quick marriages like the one he performed are not allowed because the couple have to go through the entire process of going to the civil registry, undergoing family planning seminar, obtaining their certificates of no marriage, and posting their marriage bans," Rosero said.

The usual marriage fee only ranges from P1,000 to P1,500.

The suspect now faces charges of estafa through swindling in the Manila City Prosecutor's Office, according to Rosero.

METRO-BRIEFS

Getchal

EIGHT GIN suspected call addicts in Caloocan were arrested to surrender arms in Caloocan City in a crackdown effort by local authorities to curb the proliferation of illegally-held firearms during the election.

Mayor Enrico Echiverri Grand Slam Prides Tango said the campaign were initiated by Caloocan police commander Supt. Ernesto Pedro Jan. 17. A ship gun is seized in exchange and holdup matters prompted the police to intensify their drive against violence involving gun city residents. Among the high-profile guns were the Mercenario Grenade, the stolen ring the Mayor to Death of Roberto Ely Hospital and the Boundary of Caloocan and Valenzuela.

Nancy C. Carvajal

Rizal High homecoming

THE MABOLO A. Rizal High School in Pasay, Manila will hold its 69th general alumni homecoming on Sunday at the campus grounds. Rector of the Visayanon Reunion-Pahiyas Pre-Reunion Movement Together Jo-vendingin Gee Ke-Aquin C. Guerrero, president of the Manuel A. Roxas High School Alumni Foundation, Inc. reunion will start with a thanksgiving Mass at 10 a.m. For participation, please contact Gen. Enrique Evardo (+6722020) Marcelino Carreon (6522432), Mr. Lolito Villegas (6527668), Tanit Lee (6512154555).

Uneasy calm in Beirut after intense fighting

BEIRUT—LEBANON TOOK stock Friday after a day of deadly street battles in the capital between government and opposition supporters which killed two people and sparked fears of a plunge back into civil conflict.

No unruly calm prevailed in Beirut as the lifting of an overnight curfew imposed to end the intense fighting between rival Sunni and Shiite Muslim in which around 150 people were also wounded.

The riots, in a downtown area once the real of the 1975-1990 civil war, overshadowed a Paris donors' conference which drew pledges of $7.6 billion in aid for Prime Minister Rafi Hariri's beleaguered government.

A few shops and businesses opened when the overnight curfew ended at 6 a.m. (0400 GMT), but schools and universities remained shut across the nation in line with government orders, AFP correspondents reported.

The roads where the clashes erupted were covered with litter and rubble, rubble burnt-out cars, tyres and large garbage containers lined streets close to Beirut international airport.

During the night, the Lebanese army deployed heavily across the downtown capital, staging patrols and manning checkpoints on main streetlights. The clashing came two days after the Syrian-backed opposition, led by the Shiite fundamentalist party Hezbollah, brought the country to a near-halt through a general strike which was also marred by widespread deadly clashes.

"Rehearsal for civil war in the center of Beirut," warned the headline of the al-Balad newspaper.

"Twenty-five cars were produced in," cried the bold headline of the leftist As Safir newspaper in reference to confessional dimension.

Thursday's clashes first broke out on the main campus of Beirut Arab University but fighting soon penetrated mainly Muslim districts of the capital, both Sunni and Shiite.

Double throw curbs, set fire to tires to block traffic, torched cars and smashed windshields amid the rattle of gunshots as troops fired into the air to try to disperse the crowds. There were reports of gunfire and pictures showed masked men holding guns and assault rifles.

"Confessional riots must start inside in Beirut, and the specter of discord required a call to calm and prompted political action," said the headline of the leading An Nahar newspaper.

It however wondered whether the "discord that took place yesterday, and which threatened to become a scary reality in Beirut, wouldn't help some political deadlocks and debate (the crisis because various Lebanese forces framed to have lost complete control over the explosive events." The riots only ended with calls for calm from leaders of both sides and an uneasy suspected truce—the first such action in the country since violent labor demonstrations in 1996.

The danger of further violence ongoing prompted Hezbollah chief Hassan Nasrallah to promptly respond with a call for army-ordered to be obeyed.

As the Parliament hosted opposition-initiated the government camp of wresting the floor, MP Nabil Nicolas of the parliamentary majority said the fighting was triggered by Syrian President "Bashar al-Assad who is trying to turn Beirut." "Curfew in Beirut after it was declared by military commanding a coup," read the headline of the pro-Hezbollah newspaper, owned by the family of MP Saad Hariri, head of the anti-Syrian parliamentary majority. AFP

Russian laughs off threat over poisoning

MOSCOW—RUSSIAN PRESIDENT Andrei Lugovoy on Friday laughed off a report that Britain was preparing to demand his extradition to stand trial for the poisoning of former Russian spook Alexander Litvinenko.

Lugovoy, a former KGB bodyguard who later worked as head of security for tycoon Boris Berezovsky, described when a Reuters correspondent read the Guardian report to him.

"You can say on Reuters that when Lugovoy was read the Guardian report about my extradition, Lugovoy gave full-hearted, healthy laughter," he said by telephone.

He declined to answer any other questions and said reporters should refer to earlier interviews. In an interview with Reuters last month, he denied his guilt and lashed out at British media for portraying him as a monster.

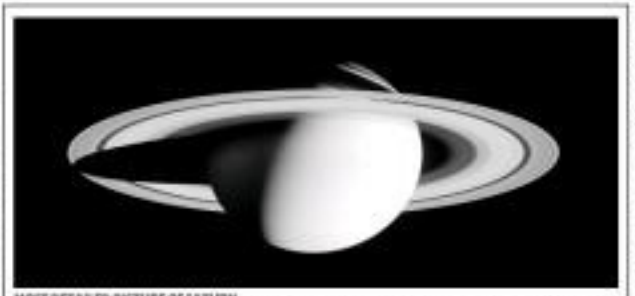
Lugovoy and another businessman Dmitry Kovtun met Litvinenko in a London hotel on Nov. 1, the day Litvinenko fatefully fell.

Litvinenko, a former spy who became a Kremlin critic, died of polonium 210 poisoning on Nov. 23, three weeks later.

The Guardian quoted unidentified British officials as saying an extradition request for Lugovoy could be made as early as next month. British police had no immediate comment.

Lugovoy was treated at a Moscow hospital after Litvinenko's death for what some Russian media said was radiation sickness. Lugovoy refused to say what he was being treated for.

British detectives questioned him last week at a Moscow hospital that specializes in treating people with radiation sickness. AP



MOST DETAILED PICTURE OF SATURN

View of Saturn taken by cameras aboard the Cassini spacecraft released by Nasa, Jan. 24. Cassini captured a series of images in Oct. 2004 that have been composed into the largest, most detailed, global natural view of Saturn and its rings ever made. The mosaic consists of 126 images acquired in a tile-like fashion, covering 300 and of Saturn's rings to the other and the entire planet in between.

US unveils revolutionary heat-beaming weapon

BOOBY AIR FORCE BASE, Georgia—The US Defense Department on Wednesday unveiled what it called a revolutionary heat-beaming weapon that could be used to control mobs or repel foes in conflicts like Iraq and Afghanistan.

The so-called Active Denial System causes an intense burning sensation causing people to run for cover, but no lasting harm, officials said.

"This is a breakthrough technology that's going to give our forces a capability they don't now have," Theodore Bunn, an assistant deputy undersecretary of defense for advanced systems and concepts, told reporters. "We expect the services to add it to their tool kit. And that could happen as early as 2006."

The weapon, mounted on a Humvee, emits a large rectangular dish antenna to direct an invisible beam toward a target. It includes a high-voltage power unit and heat-generating equipment and is effective at more than 500 meters.

Existing countermeasures systems designed just to kill—including beam bag munitions and rubber bullets—work at little more than "rock-throwing distances," said Marine Col. Bill Ulrich, director of the Pentagon's Joint Non-Lethal Weapons Directorate.

In increasingly complex military operations, the technology provided of a much needed alternative to just going from "shooting to shooting," said Ulrich, who is responsible for the weapon's five-year, $60 million advanced development.

Validation of the system could help it penetrate and save time regulations, including crowd control and mob dispersal, checkpoint security and port protection, officials said. It would also help in conflicts like Iraq and Afghanistan.

Raytheon Co., which has worked in develop the technology, has built a prototype called Silent Guardian, that it hopes to sell to the United States and abroad in what could become a multibillion market.

The weapon was shown off publicly for the first time at Moody Air Force Base in Georgia, where it has been undergoing operational tests by the 820th Security Forces Group, which protects Air Force assets. Reuters

In Indonesia, highest alert over bird flu

JAKARTA—INDONESIA IS DOING all it can to fight bird flu, the outgoing minister said on Friday, a day after officials announced the country's first death from the virus.

Indonesia, which has the world's highest number of human fatalities from bird flu, has been trying to step up efforts to stamp out the disease after a flare up in cases this year following a brief lull.

"Even though our continued effort to be giving some significant progress, we are still on highest alert," Welfare Minister Aburizal Bakrie said at a ceremony to receive 100,000 sets of protective equipment donated by the United States.

Bakrie said the government had successfully set up testing centers in provinces of bird flu in nine of the 30 high-risk provinces.

The climate, however, remains endemic to fowl because of the most densely populated parts of Indonesia, including Java.

Above or spikes in cases this year in, domestic fowl to ban backyard poultry in the capital and surrounding provinces, but previous culling attempts have faltered because of a lack of funds and difficulty enforcing ban in more remote areas

The WORLD

Editor Lorenzo B. Ilusorio

Bush authorizes killing Iranians in Iraq

WASHINGTON—US PRESIDENT GEORGE W. BUSH has authorized the US military to kill or capture Iranian agents active inside Iraq. The Washington Post reported on Friday, citing government and counterterrorism officials with direct knowledge of the plan.

The move, approved last fall, is aimed at weakening Iran's influence in the region and forcing Tehran to abandon its nuclear program than the latter believes is for nuclear weapons and not energy, the newspaper said, citing the unidentified officials.

For more than a year, US forces have held dozens of Iranians for a few days, taking their weapons from some as well as photographs and fingerprints before all those captured, the report said.

Several Iranian officials have been detained in three US raids over the last month. Outgoing US ambassador to Iraq Zalmay Khalilzad told reporters on Wednesday that details of accusations against them would be made public in the coming days.

He said they were "going after networks" of security agents, which he said were a mainstay of Iran's involvement in Iraq. The United States has accused Iran of helping arm, train and fund Iraqi militants, notably Shiite Muslims.

Iran has long been at odds with the United States, pushing ahead with plans to enrich uranium as part of what Tehran calls a peaceful energy program. The West has feared that Iran instead has been trying to develop nuclear weapons.

The new policy applies to Iranian intelligence operatives and members of Iran's Revolutionary Guards thought to be working with Iraqi militias, but not civilians or diplomats, the newspaper said.

Its broadly focus was known to have been used by US troops against any Iranians, but administration officials have been pushing military commanders to exercise that authority, it said.

The newspaper said there were disputes in the intelligence community. State Department and Pentagon, including CIA Director Michael Hayden, who said Iranians may try to kidnap or kill US personnel in Iraq as payback.

Reuters

A MAN cleans up after two powerful car bombs exploded in Karrada, a predominantly Shiite neighborhood in central Baghdad, Iraq, Jan. 26.

Bomb attacks in 2 days kill 49 in Iraq; major crackdown planned

BAGHDAD—A BOMB KILLED 21 people and wounded 35 in the second attack in as many months on Baghdad's much-loved Friday morning pet market, police sources said.

The blast hit the Ghazil market in the city center an hour before a weekly 11 a.m. vehicle curfew in the Iraqi capital, aimed at preventing insurgent over Friday-noon prayers.

Bomb attacks killed at least 39 people in Baghdad on Thursday as Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki warned militants from both Shia and Sunni camps they would have nowhere to hide from a coming major crackdown backed by US troops.

On Monday, one of the deadliest attacks in recent months killed at least 88 people at nearby Sinak al-Shurjiyaeher.

A police source said witnesses believed Friday's bomb was planted in a cardboard box that the bomber had pushed with six others to pass it off as containing birds. Farmers and exotic pets are prime attractions at the market.

On Dec. 1, also a Friday, a car bomb killed three people at Ghazil market. It attracts weekend sightseers in the beleaguered city where public entertainments are scarce.

Blood stained the ground near the blast site and small birds chirped in battered cages ranged around the small square in front of an ancient Sunni mosque. Tattered black Shiite prayer flags hung in the shops, still under mourning. The population of the crowded central area is religiously mixed.

Reuters

Pregnant women fill up HK hospitals

HONG KONG—SOME HONG Kong hospitals are fully booked by expectant mothers from mainland China as new measures aimed to stem an influx of mainland Chinese women giving birth in the city soon, officials said Friday.

The new policy, effective from Feb. 1, will bar visitors at least seven months pregnant from entering Hong Kong unless they are already booked in at a hospital.

It will apply to all nonresidents but is principally aimed at deterring pregnant women from the mainland seeking last-minute admittance to hospital emergency wards for deliveries.

The authorities want to crack down on unpaid bills—minimum charges for nonresidents will be nearly doubled—and free up resources by prioritizing residents.

Babies born in Hong Kong to at least one parent of Chinese origin are also automatically granted Hong Kong citizenship, which is seen as a way for children to enjoy the territory's medical, social welfare and education advantages.

A week before the measure came into effect, nearly 700 expectant mothers have made an appointment with public hospitals in Hong Kong.

AFP

A VENDOR is surrounded with Chinese New Year decorations as a storm in Hangzhou, Hubei province in China Jan. 26. The Chinese celebrate Spring Festival with the Lunar New Year, which falls on Feb. 18 this year.

Smuggle try awakens new fear over uranium

TBILISI, GEORGIA—LAST JANUARY, A Russian man with swollen cheeks and a weepy stomach crossed into Georgia and wandered to Tbilisi by car along a high mountain road, its two plastic bags in his leather jacket. Georgian authorities say, he carried 100 grams of uranium so refined that it could help fuel an atom bomb.

The Russian, Oleg Khinsagov, had come to meet a buyer who he believed would pay him $1 million and deliver the material to a Muslim man from "a serious organization," the authorities say.

The smuggler was a vampire, just under four feet tall, and he died a year. If all went smoothly, he had boasted, he would sell a far larger cache stored in his apartment back in Vladikavkaz, 2 or 3 kilograms of the rare material, 4.3 to 6.5 pounds, which in expert hands is enough to make a small bomb.

The buyer, it turned out, was a Georgian agent. Alerted to Mr. Khinsagov's ambitions by spies in South Ossetia, Georgian officials arrested him and confiscated his snow-shoulder. After a secret trial, the smuggler was sentenced to eight and a half years in prison.

Until now, all but the vague outlines of the case have remained secret. But an examination of the episode, and a similar one in 2003, suggests that the region's political instability and culture of rampant corruption continue to provide a fertile breeding ground for illicit commerce in atomic materials.

Interviews with Georgian and American officials, along with a review of confidential government documents, provide a glimpse into a world of smugglers who slip across poorly policed borders and the agents who try to stop them.

The illicit trade—not just in atomic goods but in everything from stolen cars to fake counterfeit $100 bills—thrives especially in Georgia, where tiny separatist regions have broken away to become lawless criminal havens.

This latest atomic seizure, said the American ambassador here, John F. Tefft, "highlights how smuggling and loose border control associated with Georgia's separatist conflicts" pose a threat "not just to Georgia but to all the international community."

What is most worrisome about the two atomic arrests cases, nuclear experts say, is the material itself: in large enough quantities, it could provide a terrorist with an instant solution to the biggest challenge in making a nuclear weapon, obtaining the fuel.

The uranium seized in both 2003 and 2006 had been enriched to nearly 90 percent, according to Russian and American government analysis obtained by The New York Times. Though the quantities were too small to make a bomb, that level of purity is ideal for doing so.

New York Times News Service

Russia to build 4 nuke plants in India

NEW DELHI—INDIA SEALED A wide-ranging package of agreements with Russia on Thursday the first day of a summit meeting intended to demonstrate that their longstanding relationship had not deteriorated as a result of India's growing engagement with the United States.

In a joint statement issued after President Vladimir V. Putin of Russia met with Prime Minister Manmohan Singh of India, Russian officials revealed four new nuclear power plants in India, in addition to the two reactors it is already building here.

"Energy security is the most important of the emerging dimensions of our strategic partnership," Singh said. "Russia's position as a global leader on energy issues is widely recognized."

As India's economy booms, the prospect of growing energy shortages has become a major driver of its foreign policy. Describing Russia as a "special friend" of India, Singh acknowledged that despite the "sea change" that had occurred in international affairs over the past decade, "Russia remains indispensable to India's strategic interests."

This was Putin's first visit to India since the United States agreed to cooperate with India on its civilian nuclear power program last year, and the Indian government was at pains to show that the agreement had done nothing to dilute the warmth of India's affection for its historic partner, Russia.

Singh went to the airport to meet the Russian leader as he stepped off his plane, a pointed gesture of respect previously extended only to President Hosni and King Abdullah of Saudi Arabia.

Putin will be the guest of honor at India's Republic Day celebrations on Friday. Much of the weaponry on display will be Soviet made, a testament to the earlier close friendship between the countries in the 1970s and 1980s.

Experts said the government's decision to extend this prestigious invitation to Putin this year was symbolic of a desire to demonstrate India's continued independence in an foreign policy despite the close relationship it has forged with the United States with the signing of the nuclear agreement.

AFP

GIRLS DANCE girls wearing traditional dress perform a song during India's Republic Day celebrations in Srinagar Jan. 26.

WHAT'S INSIDE

■ Harbour five, Mail N More eye final four /A22

SPORTS
Editor Teddyboy S. Molmisa

■ Bulls snap Mavericks' win streak /A24

Quality against numbers in basketball unity tussle

By Marc Anthony Reyes

THE BASKETBALL ASSOCIATION OF THE PHILIPPINES (BAP) may have the numbers but the unity-driven Samahang Basketbol Pilipinas (SBP) has the soul and quality when it comes to forming the best national squad to represent the country in international meets.

Documents obtained by the Inquirer showed the BAP has an edge in the number of affiliates but the SBP was bragged at when it first started in bid to become the country's national federation.

Based on the documents, BAP's membership has dropped to 54 from as high as 66 from the time it started to cooperate with Filipinas Basketball for the SBP scenario. The membership of a handful of BAP groups are still under dispute.

At least 12 clubs or leagues, including big wars like National Basketball Conference, Cebu Basketball League and Visayas Athletic Association of Schools, Colleges and Universities, have reportedly switched allegiance to the Olympic-led works.

This hosted up SBP's membership.

Top four leagues

But beyond the numbers are the quality of members clubs allied with the two groups. On the SBP side are the top four leagues in the Philippines—the Philippine Basketball Association, the Philippine Basketball League, the University Athletic Association of the Philippines and the National Collegiate Athletic Association.

"We're not looking at it that way," said PBA commissioner Noli Eala. "What we are still after is the unity of all interested stakeholders in basketball. That's what the SBP stands for and that's what we hope to accomplish in the Unity Congress.

"Of course, it's nice to always have as an assurance that the biggest leagues have added seals the SBP because in terms of representing the country, we are assured of being able to form the best possible team we can send abroad."

Best representation

National teams of the past have been culled from those four leagues, and the SBP in counting on its ability to form the best representation for the country in international meets as it seeks to gain recognition of the Philippine Olympic Committee.

The source who furnished the Inquirer with the list of clubs affiliated with the BAP and the SBP said the latest exodus of clubs to the latter is expected to cripple BAP's persistent campaign to become the sole governing body of the sport.

Eala, however, said that the Unity Congress on Feb. 3 will still be the modus to determine as to how far the SBP can take its drive for unification.

"We will see if the basketball stakeholders can look beyond their parochial interests and work for the good of basketball," said Eala, the designated SBP spokesman.

"The invitation is open to all stakeholders to attend the Unity Congress, where every group will be declared a probationary members.

"If they do not attend, it's either they matter their membership or they're just waiting for developments to happen before they make their decision."

'MALE 'N TEET'S Jay Washington (right) forces a jump ball with Ginebra's Rudy Hatfield in yesterday's PBA action. See story in Lots Sports at A16. AJAY SAN DIEGO

Already in the SBP fold, according to the same source, are province-based leagues and groups. Some SBP-affiliated groups like the EL Gindlao Sports Development Foundation in Cebu, have denied drawing over but have promised to join the congress.

The SBP membership roster from Filipinas Basketball, the BAP cited that has aligned itself with the unity drive launched by business tycoon Manny V. Pangilinan.

At least four clubs or leagues, however, are listed under both PBA BAP and BAP although they were still counted by both camps as their own.

Cojuangco: RP caging needs MVP

By Jane Meneses

PHILIPPINE OLYMPIC COMMITTEE president Jose "Peping" Cojuangco yesterday wondered where SP basketball would be headed without a patron who is "connected to the president and put the national dribbler back on the international sporting map."

Cojuangco singled out ex-president Ninoy V. Pangilinan who has promised to work for the country's possible hosting of the Southeast Asian Basketball Association championships in May and the pre-qualifying tournament for the Olympics next year.

"My only fear is that one day Mr. Pangilinan might grow tired of the BAP's hardline stance and leave the sport," said Cojuangco. "If that happens, basketball is dead."

"He doesn't need this," he added. "But he's really committed to this endeavor and we're lucky to have him."

There's so many things that could be done for basketball that were set aside because of this problem."

SBP officials briefed the POC chief about their recent trip to the international basketball federation's (Fiba) headquarters in Geneva, Switzerland, the other night.

Cojuangco, towers, assured Pangilinan and company that the POC would accommodate the SBP as soon as the new organization completes the stabilization process.

After the Unity Congress on Feb. 3, the next step for the SBP is to form the national team as required by the Fiba's statutes before asking for recognition from the POC and the Fiba.

Sun Group Plans
3 lines. 3 phones.
Unlimited calls and texts* All for ₱999/month

Great choices and deals for the family!

Now available
Group Plan 699
3 Free Phones. 3 Lines.

sun CELLULAR
Better network, better value.

Barrera not hot at rematch; Marquez wants Pacman bad

MARQUEZ

By Francis Ochoa

MARCO ANTONIO BARRERA AND JUAN Manuel Marquez, who drag it out on May 27 for the WBC super featherweight title crown in the Mandalay Bay Casino on March 17, have taken separate answers in the unresolved Manny Pacquiao.

While Marquez still hopes to get a rematch against Pacquiao, Barrera has coolly deflected the issue, opting instead to announce his co-ruling at the end of 2008—whether or not he gets a fight with the Gen. Santos City ace, regarded as the No. 1 pound-for-pound fighter in the world.

"I see past the fight," Barrera told Inside Boxing daily.com. "I assume it, but it's does not happen, it does not happen. I am looking to retire in 2008."

Barrera (62-4, 42 KOs) and Marquez (46-3-1, 35 KOs) spoke with the boxing website during the press conference hosted by Golden Boy Promotions chief Oscar De La Hoya for their fight.

And it was Marquez who is hot after Pacquiao.

"It is like a small thorn in a boot's paw," Marquez told the website. "I want to remove that thorn, which is getting annoying, from my paw."

The "hoot" was feared three times when he faced Pacquiao in May 2004, but fought brilliantly to a controversial draw. A judge later admitted he erred in scoring, denying Pacquiao of victory.

A rematch was supposed to be in the works, but Marquez balked at the purse and took on Chris John for a lesser amount instead and, worse, lost that fight.

Barrera had been demolished by Pacquiao when the two met in last autumn, Texas, in 2003. Pacquiao scored an 11th-round technical knockout of the Mexican icon, one an dominant and brutal many people thought it would be the end of Barrera's career.

But Barrera bounced back, beating unbeaten Erik Morales to end their trilogy in his favor and then scoring a decision over Bobby Jeanne, a fight where he was booed by the crowd for playing safe.

A legal battle loomed for De La Hoya's Golden Boy Promotions and their lawsuit. Top Rank executive said what could have been a highly-anticipated rematch between the two super featherweights.

Still, De La Hoya, who promotes Barrera and Marquez, said that he is willing to arrange a fight between his fighters and Marquez if that is what they want.

"If Marco wants that fight before he retires this year, I will work on it," De La Hoya said.

Harbour five, Mail N More eye final four

AN "UNSELFISH" DIK-DIAN COULD STEER IN THE WAY OF RAMBOUR CENTER'S semifinal bid in the PBL Silver Cup today at the Ultimate College Sports Center in Dasmariñas.

Ultimate Uralifter two Patida said he banking on a second-up for Jesus in its 2 p.m. quarterfinal match against the Pest Masters, who only need to win once to advance to the semifinals.

"Bonus is very smoothly," said Uralifter two Luigi Tello. "He gets his team-mates involved. We know he's going to be doubled (defended), we're anticipating for him to be doubled again. But he's willing to sacrifice, that's also a good defense."

And that Harbour Centre, Mail and More will be using a move to lose advantage when it takes on doubled Sirius at 4 p.m.

Mail and More, however, will be short-ing for a semifinal slot without coach Lawrence Christiano, who left for Hong Kong yesterday after two years as mentor.

Assistant coach Hilbert Gregorio will man the Cosmic sidelines.

But for Uralifter Sirius, the real threat will be the inside presence of Cosmic dominant JR Quiñahan.

"We have two very good Quiñahan, he's the best point of Mail and More's offense and defense," said Sirius mentor Caloy Garcia.

The winner of the quarterfinal tilt between the Solar Comets and Coleman Lindsfar will take on early-semifinalist Taytay One.

Hope PEU, similarly waiting in the wings for a two-of-for semifinal series, will square off with the winner of the Mail and More and Mail Sirius rounds.

Although the Comets had the upper hand over the hoper hosters in the elimination round, 61-54, Garcia pointed to the improved performances of Lawrence Bonito, Mikel Miss and Conrad Bonito.

For the Harbourmen, Mons. Kramer and Macky Escalona started in their 81-72 triumph over SlimTech in the Knockout phase.

Jeannine M. Paro

A FIGHTING Raoul Hemilla (left) of Harbour Centre draws a foul from TaleTech's Eugene Tan (center) during a recent match-men by the Port Masters.

Jover powers FEU booters past Tigers; Eagles score

ACE STRIKER ROMNICK JOVER STRUCK rules as Far Eastern University nipped University of Santo Tomas, 2-1, Thursday at the Ateneo football grounds in Katipunan and stayed on top of the standings of the UAAP season 69.

Jover's goals in the 14th and 18th minutes snatched the UST's lone goal in the 13th through Lester Schwenzenstein as the Tamaraws notched their third win in as many matches.

The Tamaraws played solid defense the rest of the way to foil the aggressive Tigers, who kept second place in the five-team standings with a 2-1-1 win-draw-loss record.

Jeremiah Herrera scored the only goal of the second game as Ateneo broke into the win column for the first time with a hard-earned 1-0 victory over the Adamson Falcons.

Clemente broke down the Xlibrarians for the volley that left no chance for the UE goalkeeper.

The Blue Eagles rose to 1-1-1, a point in front of the collar-dwelling Warriors (0-2-0), while Ust-versity of the Philippines kept third spot with a 1-2-0 record.

Tomorrow's matches ending the first round eliminations, also at the Ateneo field, pits UP against Ateneo at 1 p.m. and FEU versus UE at 3 p.m.

In the women's football, UP (3-0-0) goes up against Ateneo (0-1-1) at 1 p.m. and FEU (1-0-2) battles UST (3-0-0) at 3 p.m.

Hoisting pack going on this 12-and-11 at the Blue Eagle gym. With a report from Jeannine M. Paro

Jaca battles feared Indon for WBO title

JACA: Predicted

FILIPINO PROSPECT JIMREX JACA goes for the WBO Asia Pacific super featherweight title when he fights Indonesian titleholder Simson Bolar Inz. on the 11 undercards of Cristina Fernando Montiel "Monster of Truth" card at the Cebu City Sports Complex.

Promoter Sammy Gello-son said Jaca, who made a gallant losing stand against Mexican Juan Manuel Marquez last November, will fight the feared Indon champion before taking part in the huge May 6 card pitting Oscar De la Hoya against Floyd Mayweather Jr.

"Everything is in place," Gello-son announced yesterday. "Simson will be fighting for the title against the very dangerous dominican from Indonesia."

Bolar flaunt gained notoriety among Filipino fans when he defeated Glen Donaire in a single round for the WBO bronze last Sept. 23 in Tagbilaran City to respond of the TKO victories thrashed in 2005.

Jaca praised Juan Manuel Marquez as the best in Texas in November last year before yielding in the fourteenth. "Ito Filipino's positive manner prompted Oscar De la Hoya to announce that the second prize title a shot in the rematch they'll more at the MGM Grand.

The lithium, Negros-based Jaca is making at the ALA Gym under the guidance of Robert Bolisli, who had been signed by Golden Boy Promotions for the job.

Aaron L. Lagumbay, Contributor

SPORTSWATCH

Football Fiesta kicks off at La Salle-Zobel

PBA ref to officiate China-Korea game

WVL SIZZLES

200 entries collide in Las Piñas

TJT derby kicks off at Roligon today

Asia's granddaddy; Erap's son

By Percy D. Dela

SACRAMENTO, CALIFORNIA—FOREST about about an obituary.

Cancel the requiem.

Tell the Bees to hold off on the tuxedo.

And please, drive the waiters away. It's not their size to cry. Not just yet.

Granddaddy is just as death-knell, but he's, still alive.

Granddaddy is very old and in failing health. Will he live another month? Another year?

Nobody knows for sure.

Nobody is the 59th Philippine Golf Open, which, by any other name, should matter to the sports spectators like you and me.

To hell, in matter. The Philippine Open may supposed to kick off the Asian tour early this month.

But commercial sponsorship hemorrhaged out. So like an addendum to a book, the Open has been re-penciled for Feb. 1-4.

Asia's longest running and oldest golf championship tried so be a celebration. But it has become a distraction, an afterthought, it seems to the Asian tavern.

The Philippine Open was never a lucrative stop. But it was an unspoken tradition, many of golf's most illustrious names—Gary Player, Sam Snead, Bruce Crampton and Sid Vicious—played it in its heyday.

Of course, local golf's most revered players—Lanty Morales, Dolentino "Espot and Bert Avila—made their mark by winning the Open multiple times.

It only be the history granddaddy used to be an iconic diamond. Now it's relic invitation to say the least.

There was this grand design by local golf officials and the Asian tour to make man's grand old name in its former stature? What's become of that plan?

COMMENTARY

Is it a case of spinning sponsorship? Prospective contributors, it seems, would rather put money into less worthy sports. So what else is new?

It took the doddlenuts of our municipal town to salvage, I mean save, the local Open.

Will someone step up in the plate next year?

Or will the Open die a slow death, just like another revered Filipino sports tradition, the "four up" Filipino bicycle derby?

Will there be mourning again all over the archipelago?

You're correct in a guess or none.

I don't know few. Boggsy Estrada, the deposed president of the Basketball Association of the Philippines. But I certainly know his dad, the former president.

I covered Joseph Estrada on the road in the United States in the spring of 1976, for the Philippine Daily Inquirer. I enriched him from a sportswriter's to that of an entertainment reporter.

Erap—the great actor and then mayor of San Juan, Rizal—led a galaxy of show business stars on that journey from one to-the-ing other.

He was goodwill ambassador now to lure stateside Filipinos to either come home for a visit or even home for good.

The long trip wore the body out but soothed the soul.

Boggsy, whom Erap as much he loves being joined at the hip—will his father.

What do you know? The true of them appear to suffer the same fate.

Erap was filled with good intentions for the Filipino people but allegedly filled his pockets with dollar sweeps and proceeds from an illegal numbers' game.

Boggsy was filled with good intentions for sequel the horse, but true unconventionally dumped anyway.

Erap said one are joined at the hips indeed.

Bardon seeks OPBF fly crown March 18

FLIPPING CHAMPION AND TOP OPBF CONtender Jaya Sinclair will on for the vacant OPBF flyweight title on March 18 against No. 4 Shunsuke Nagamura at the International Conference Hall in Kagoya, Japan.

The 27-year-old Cebuchanol San Carlos native, coming off a win over Jun Itabana, will be fighting in his biggest bout yet.

Nagamura boasts a 11-0-1 (2 KOs) record.

In his last fight, Nagamura stopped Filipino Gilbert De la Torre in seven rounds in Nagoya for his only bout against a foreign foes.

Aaron L. Lagumbay, Contributor

Mendoza starts Chair's Cup defense

LIPA CITY— MAYR Mendoza opens defense of his crown 18 today in the ninth edition of the Chairman's Cup at Club Mahaharal o'clock, sides Inde bayanis.

Tee-off time is 8 a.m. shotgun start.

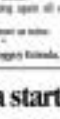
Proceeds of the 18-hole tournament, featuring a honors field of 216 amateur-paste pairs, will benefit the Dr. De La Salle Lipa scholars of Malacañan chair Tony Tavalba.

"This is one international which serves a noble purpose and provides a fun venue for all of the friends of Malacañan," Tavalba said.

All players will receive golf set tillcaps from Tony Cervone and items from the Amber Group. A Honda car and a set of Mizuno golf clubs are being stalled each hole in one prizes.

A dinner-fundraiser will be held for the after noon before the awards ceremonies.

The fund-raising event is also backed by Amber Group, AFT Properties, Asian Spirit, Benpesto, Malacañan Petroleum Circle, Rizal Flora and Master Spices.


YUKALBA

RP epicenter of international pool

MAGAMENTA: Vision

REYES: Outstanding

ALCANO: Improved

ORCOLLO: Breakout

EXPERIENCE
THE THRILL

HOPE
The luxury cigarette

Government Warning:
Cigarette smoking is dangerous to your health.

SPORTS

Bulls snap Mavericks' win streak

CHICAGO—BEN GORDON SCORED 30 POINTS, LUOL Deng added 21 and the Chicago Bulls snapped the Dallas Mavericks' eight-game winning streak with a 96-85 victory in the NBA on Thursday.

Dirk Nowitzki led Dallas with 30 points and 11 rebounds.

Were mostly blowing us early 17 points lead, the Bulls pulled away late in the fourth quarter.

Nowitzki's 3 closed Chicago's lead to 79-70 with 4:24 left.

PJ Brown followed with a basket for Chicago and Kirk Hinrich followed with a 3, making it 84-76. Erick Dampier's dunk for Dallas cut the lead to 86-83, but Brown answered for Chicago by going around Nowitzki for a basket and hitting a jumper to put Chicago up 90-82 with 1:36 left.

Brown scored all six of his 12 points in the fourth quarter.

Clippers 102, Nets 101

At Los Angeles, Cuttino Mobley made a 3-pointer with 0.6 left on the clock, sending the hard-luck Nets to their third straight nine-point loss.

Elton Brand and reserve forward Corey Maggette each scored 18 points, helping Los Angeles (33-21) climb back to the .500 mark for the first time since Dec. 11. Sam Cassell added 13 points and 10 assists.

Vince Carter scored 30 points for the Nets, who had won nine of 11 prior to this three-game skid.

They were beaten Monday at Sacramento on a jumper by Mike Bibby with 18.3 seconds remaining, then were tapped at the buzzer on a 17-footer by Golden State's Mickie Ellis on Wednesday. AP

NBA TODAY ON BASKETBALL TV

8 a.m.—Washington vs. Detroit (repeat of 1 p.m. 8 WIN) (L)

DALLAS guard Jason Terry (left) and Chicago playmaker Kirk Hinrich battle for possession.

James leads vote; Arenas rallies to pocket All-Star starting spot

NEW YORK—WASHINGTON WIZARDS star Gilbert Arenas surged past Vince Carter in the final days of NBA All-Star game voting to claim the second Eastern Conference guard spot by only 3,019 votes on Thursday.

LeBron James, the MVP last year, led all players with more than 25 million votes for the 56th All-Star game in Las Vegas.

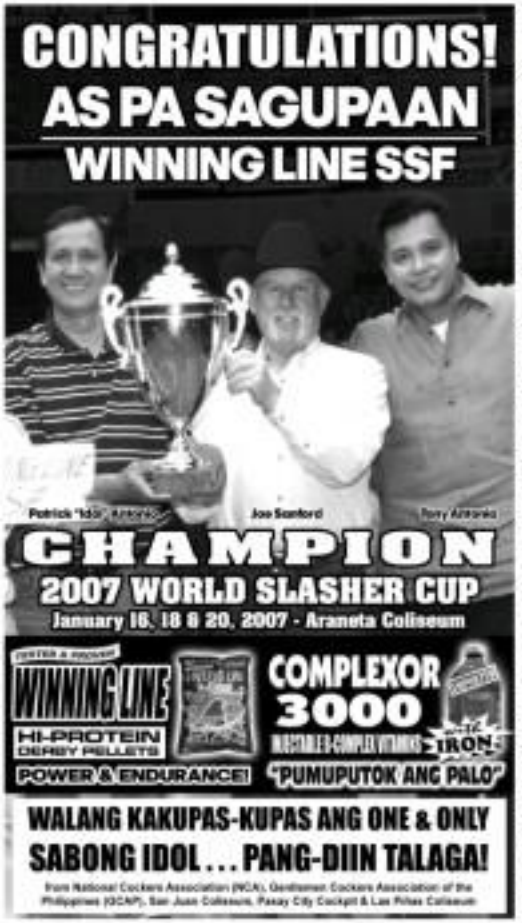
The first All-Star game held outside an NBA city will maintain one traditional look. Shaquille O'Neal was chosen to his 14th straight All-Star game, tying Jerry West and Karl Malone for the most consecutive selections.

Arenas won 2,134,469 votes behind Carter two weeks ago, but finished with 1,454,146 to Carter's 1,451,316.

"It is an unbelievable feeling," Arenas said. "Two years ago, I was voting myself in for the game. Now fans are voting me in, and I'm going to do what they are looking for. I've got something to give back to the fans during all-star weekend."

Arenas, O'Neal and James will be joined in the East lineup by Dwyane Wade and another first-time starter, Toronto forward Chris Bosh.

Injured Houston center Yao Ming led all West players with more than 2.4 million votes. Kevin Garnett and Tim Duncan were voted in at forward, while Baby Bryant and Tony Parker will be the guard spots. AP



Gonzalez crushes Haas, sets final date vs Federer

MELBOURNE, AUSTRALIA—FOURTH SEED Fernando Gonzalez dominated Germany's Tommy Haas, 6-1, 6-3, 6-1, Friday to reach the Australian Open final.

In a performance reminiscent of top-ranked Roger Federer's years of finally finding his niche after semifinal a night earlier, Gonzalez was nearly flawless, burning the 12th-seeded Haas around and frustrated with a brilliant array of shots that had the capacity crowd gasping.

Gonzalez, once known for a weak backhand and a fragile psyche, has improved both significantly in recent months and has won over thousands of fans here with his powerful serve-and-forehand.

The Chilean ran off the first 11 points of the match and had 17 winners in the first set without committing a single unforced error. Haas won only 33 points in the seven games.

Gonzalez dipped only slightly in the second set and in 12 minutes and three unforced errors as Haas, his confidence deserted, spiked his racket once and came close to slamming it into the court on two of his occasions.

Haas tried to pick on Gonzalez's backhand, but the Chilean just kept getting back shot after shot after shot until he got a chance to wind up on a forehand and send ringers into the corners.

Gonzalez, who never faced a break point, finished it off with a backhand crosscourt winner for his seventh service break. AP

Sharapova, Williams all set

MELBOURNE, AUSTRALIA—THE GRAND Slam rematch of Serena Williams against Maria Sharapova has been two years in the making.

Their initial meeting came in the 2004 Wimbledon final, when Sharapova won her first major. In the 2005 Australian Open semifinals, Sharapova served twice for the match, once in the second set, once in the third—and blew four match points before losing 8-6 in the third.

On Saturday they meet in the finals of the Australian Open.

Sharapova, who beat Ana Ivanovic, 6-4, 6-2, in Thursday's semifinals, said that four or five months back doesn't hold any special meaning in her rematch with Williams.

"It was just a loss in my career," Sharapova said. "I had the opportunity to be in another Grand Slam final. I didn't take them. I've had wins against her. I've had losses against her. They were just a loss."

Since the 2005 match, Sharapova has reached the semifinals at five other Grand Slams, and won the US Open last year.

Williams, who played only four tournaments in 2006 because of a lingering knee injury, hasn't added to her seven Grand Slam titles since she won in Australia two years ago.

WILLIAMS

SHARAPOVA

"The players have split four matches—Williams winning in straight sets at Miami in 2004, Sharapova at Wimbledon, Sharapova in three in the season-ending year championship in 2004 and Williams in Australia in 2005).

Williams, unseeded and No. 81 when the tournament began, last surprised to be in the final the best 12th-ranked Nicole Vaidisova, 7-6 (5), 6-4, in the other semifinal.

"I wouldn't say for me it's an astonishing achievement," Williams said. "I would say I am happy more than anything. It's not astonishing or surprising, definitely something I have always expected." AP

Tour rookie steals Buick show

SAN DIEGO—US PGA TOUR ROOKIE BRANDT Snedeker had trouble remembering a round he will never forget at the Buick Invitational on Thursday.

Snedeker threw a wide golf's magic number on 12, his birdies (four) up on the North Course at Torrey Pines and he settled for a 61 to tie the course record and take a two-shot lead.

"The whole front side was a blur," said Snedeker, who couldn't recall how he finished some of the holes, much less what those holes contained.

Snedeker generated the biggest buzz on the Buick Invitational, where two-time defending champion Tiger Woods opened with a 66 and was rewarded to a supporting role.

"To save the record kind of sounds there may back to me from Tiger was kind of nice," said Snedeker, who played two groups behind Woods. "Seeing that scoreboard was one the last time before...although I couldn't bring it to the way they wanted—two million. I had a blast."

Woods had just knocked down the flag with a 1-iron for a short eagle putt on the 18th hole when he noticed a scoreboard on his way to the first tee that showed Snedeker at 6 under through seven holes.

"My thought is was a surprise," Woods said. "It came up again, so obviously it was not a misprint. That's more proactive." AP

Website: business.inquirer.net

BUSINESS

Editor Raul G. Marcelo • Assistant Editor Corrie S. Mariano

Business letters: inquirer.businessmail@inquirer.com.ph (Globe) or 896 (Smart) E-mail: business@inquirer.com.ph

OFW remittances hit all-time high of $14B

'06 record tops BSP's earlier estimate of $13.4B

By Dona C. Dantao

DOLLARS SENT HOME BY OVERSEAS FILIPINO WORKERS through the banking system and other channels likely hit an all-time high of $14 billion in 2006, the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas estimated.

The BSP's original expectation was that total OFW inflows would hit about $13.4 billion for the year against about $11.6 billion in 2005.

BSP Deputy Governor Diwa Guinigundo told reporters that total OFW inflows last year likely ranged between $13 billion and $14 billion, of which $12 or $13 billion were routed through the banking system.

The high end of the projection was equivalent to about 60 percent of the BSP's foreign-exchange reserves, which likewise surged to an all-time high of $23 billion in end-2006.

(STORY ON A2)

IN THIS ISSUE

PAL seeks listing of more shares /B2

Peso's expected strength seen to cut NLEX rates /B4

Economy seen growing 5.7% on high invest flows

By Michelle V. Rosca

AN INCREASE IN INVESTMENT INFLOWS will help spur domestic demand and boost the Philippines' economic growth to 5.7 percent this year, according to the Institute of International Finance Inc. (IIF).

"Investment has been languishing for two years, but is poised to turn up with greater credit availability and the prospect for improving rates, and so capacity constraints become more binding," said IIF, an organization of foreign financial institutions.

IIF's 5.7 percent economic growth forecast for the Philippines for this year is higher than the 5.4 percent estimate it made last year.

The 2007 forecast, however, was less optimistic than the government's official assessment of between 6.1 to 7 percent.

Analysts said the declining interest rates, marked by the all-time lows in benchmark treasury bills rates, provided a welcoming environment for businesses as bank loans are expected to be cheaper.

IIF said that the projected rise in investment was expected to result in the growth of domestic demand. From the estimated 4.0-percent growth in domestic demand last year, IIF said this could accelerate to 5.1 percent this year.

Private consumption is seen to grow this year by 3.6 percent, while government consumption is projected to rise by 6.6 percent.

Increase in domestic demand would more than compensate for the expected slowdown in exports, IIF said. Exports, a main growth driver in 2006, is seen to decelerate a bit this year because of the projected deceleration in the economies of major export markets, including the United States and Japan.

The expected increase in government consumption is anchored on the anticipated passage of the proposed P1.16-trillion national budget for 2007, which will partly compensate for the use of a truncated budget last year that curtailed spending and restricted growth.

Last year, with the failure of Congress to pass the proposed P1.033-trillion budget, the government was forced to operate using a

(STORY ON B4)

Stocks end sharply lower

• Home to Brent International School
• Ideally situated and just a 10-minute drive from Alabang and 30 minutes from Makati
• World-class facilities including underground power and communication system
• 24-hours, 3-level security protocol
• Exciting and thriving international community
• Expatriate families have the privilege of owning townhomes through Condominium Certificate of Title (CCT)

Come to the launch of Duplex Plans 4 & 5 Townhomes and experience international living
January 28, 2007 • 1 PM - 6 PM
at the Brentville International Main Clubhouse

How to get there: From the South Luzon Expressway, take the Mamplasan Exit, turn left from the toll gate and you will find Brentville International.

Lot price starts at P10,200/sqm

Call (+632) 807-5511 • (+632) 807-6907

FILINVEST

PAL seeks listing of more shares

Move in line with backdoor listing plan

By Dante L. Lanao

PAL HOLDINGS INC., FORMERLY BAGUIO Gold Holdings, has filed an application with the Philippine Stock Exchange for the listing of some 5 billion additional shares in line with Philippine Airlines' backdoor listing plans.

In a letter to the PSE, Pal Holdings' corporate secretary Ma. Cecilia L. Penayo said the shares were issued pursuant to the debt-to-equity conversion agreement between the company and Trustmark Holdings Corp.

The application for listing came a few days after the Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) approved the increase in the holding firm's authorized capital stock from P450 million to P10 billion, in aptitude to PAL's backdoor listing.

Once approved, the listing of the additional shares will complete the debt-to-equity swap, whereby will see PAL Holdings own the shares of Trustmark which, in turn, owns PAL.

However, PAL said the backdoor move is enable to the airline eventually raising money from the capital market.

"(Capital raising) is one of the options we're looking at over the longer term," according to a ranking official of the firm.

Another PAL official said, however, that any capital raising activity would only happen once the airline concludes its rehabilitation program in two years, in part because of the many restriction imposed on it by foreign creditors.

In the meantime, the backdoor listing will help PAL owners get a firmer grip on how the company is realized by the broader market, the official said.

PAL Holding's shares closed at P3.80 apiece on the PSE, lower by P0.15 from the previous day's done, with P1.3 million changing hands.

Last year, Baguio Gold Holdings Corp.—the precursor of PAL Holdings—announced that it would issue P15B million or 9% a share, for 82 percent of PAL shares within one year from the date of acquisition of those shares.

The newly formed PAL Holdings has now assumed the debts of six holding companies in the Yuchengco group that owns 82 percent of PAL—Baseco Holdings Inc., Pal Holdings Inc., Elite Pacific Holdings Inc., Rizal Holdings and Equities Inc., Network Holdings and Equities Inc. and Manuel Holdings Corp.

TRADE Secretary Peter B. Favila (third from left) inspects a scale model of the Sipalay project that will connect Kabacan in Bais City, Cities Road and Bridge Corp. (CRBC) officials, led by company vice chair and general manager Jian-hu Zhang (second from right), next with Favila to validate their commitment to complete the P5-billion Sipalay project on time. With them during the inspection are Steadcon Corp. president and CEO Cesar Quintelas and Dell Equipment and Construction Corp. group chair Alexander Asuncion.

Kepco urged to expand in RP

By Abigail L. Wu

THE DEPARTMENT OF ENERGY IS URGING Korea Electric Power Corp. (Kepco), parent firm of the country's second largest independent power producer, to explore more investment opportunities in the country particularly in Mindanao and the Pinoy Islands.

Energy Secretary Raphael Lotilla said new Kepco Philippines president Lee Sang Moo had reiterated the company's commitment to the Philippine energy market.

Kepco, together with Salcon Power Corp., is putting up a 200-megawatt (MW) coal-fired power plant in Toga, Cebu.

The project will use clean coal technology, which limits the emission of harmful nitrogen oxide and sulfur oxide to environment friendly levels.

"We appreciate Kepco's commitment to continue their operations in the country and to carry on with their road shows (investment projects), which translates energizing 200 barangays for this year alone," Lotilla said over teatime yesterday.

Kepco has so far helped provide electricity to 200 barangays nationwide.

With its current portfolio, Kepco accounts for around 13 percent of the country's installed generation capacity and it plans to further expand its operations in the country.

Kepco earlier expressed interest in bidding for the 600-MW Masinloc coal-fired power plant in Zambales and the 600-MW Calaca coal-fired power facility in Batangas.

Lotilla said the power firm was also looking at renewable energy investments in the country.

Kepco's Philippine operations currently include Kepco Philippines Corp., which operates the 650-MW Mahiya Thermal Power Plant in Rizal, and KEPCO Ilijan Corp., which operates the 1,200-MW Ilijan Combined Cycle Power Plant in Batangas.

GSIS plans to invest 30% of assets overseas

THE PENSION FUND GOVERNMENT Service Insurance System wants to invest up to $2.5 billion, or over 30 percent of its assets, overseas from next month and plans to hire two global asset managers to oversee two initial blocks of $500 million each.

GSIS president Winston Garcia said several low returns from government debt and a lack of alternative investments locally were forcing the GSIS to broaden its horizons.

"The market is too small already," Garcia said. "We are planning, initially hopefully before May, to make a tender so that our rate actual runs top assets' asset managers, starting at $200 million each and ultimately to target $2-$2.5 billion."

Garcia said GSIS, which has over P400 billion or $8.2 billion in assets, would have to liquidate some US-dollar-denominated bonds to fund the initial tranche of $500 million.

He added that he was also confident he could sell some key local assets this year and reinvest the proceeds overseas.

The GSIS is one of the biggest investors in the Philippines, with significant stakes in almost all the major listed companies and holding a 14-percent holding in San Miguel Corp. and a near-on-the-land-and-bree giant's board.

The overseas move would be a major step for the GSIS, which was forced to quickly abandon its only other foray abroad—a $18-million investment a decade ago—after a series of disappointing property purchases.

When he took over the helm at the GSIS in 2001, it was skewed more as a social welfare agency for its 1.3 million members than a pension fund. It had a deficit of around P25 billion, inefficiency and corruption were rife.

Using technology and a new regime, Garcia weeded out bogus members, clamped down on non-employed who defaulted on GSIS loans and ensured premium were collected. Currently the fund has a surplus of about P1.8 billion.

Some 30 percent of the fund's portfolio is invested in the Philippine stock exchange (PSE), currently close to 14-year highs and the top performing stock market in South-East Asia, up nearly 30 percent since the start of the year.

The index finished up nearly one percent at 3,273.39 points on Thursday and that he believes it will be over 3,500 by the end of 2007 but lack of liquidity is a problem with the PSE's top 30 firms, on average, offering just one third of their stock for sale.

To encourage companies to offer more, Garcia said the GSIS was thinking of starting its own PSE trades fund. He also said the GSIS, along with other stakeholders, hoped to list Philippine National Construction Corp. this year and raise P4 billion in capital.

Liquidity is not a problem for the GSIS with a monthly new cash inflow of two billion pesos and even the national government paying back P9 billion in interest repayments and P11.5 billion toward the principal before Christmas—a rare present.

Reuters

Global Steel starts exporting to Brazil

GLOBAL STEEL PHILIPPINES INC., THE country's biggest maker of flat steel products, is exporting more than 10,000 metric tons of cold rolled coils (CRC) and hot rolled coils (HRC) to Brazil for the first time, a company executive said in a press statement.

According to Colin E. Dodge, Global Steel managing director, some 9,000 metric tons of CRC and 7,000 metric tons of HRC were now being prepared for immediate shipment to Brazil.

"Our exports to various markets worldwide—including Indonesia, Italy, India, Russia, Malaysia, Thailand, Turkey, Vietnam, United Arab Emirates—prove that Global Steel products are rapidly gaining worldwide acceptance," Dodge said. He attributed this to the company's quality production standards, competitive pricing and use of state-of-the-art technology.

Commenting on the current market scenario, company spokesperson Sargunan Mohanty said steel demand was picking up in the United States, European and Asian countries resulting in improvement in prices in a range of US$30 to US$40 per metric ton.

In light of the steady increase in demand for Global Steel products both in the domestic and overseas markets, the Bgas plant is poised to expand its production capacity this year.

Global Steel presently exports 70 percent of its production, primarily to Asian countries.

Unilab gets patent for new technology

UNITED LABORATORIES INC. RECENTLY obtained the approval of its "InnoMax" patent by the United States Patent and Trademark Office, Unilab president and chief executive officer Carlos Ejercito said.

Ejercito said that "InnoMax" technology was a result of extensive research by Pedia Ib. ch™, Unilab's research and development (R&D) arm dedicated to developing innovative solutions in childcare.

"This breakthrough technology demonstrates the Filipino scientists' ingenuity to research and development solutions to the world's best," Ejercito remarked.

Nicasio Dee, Unilab's senior vice president for R&D, said InnoMax™ makes water-containing syrups and significantly reduces the inherent bitter taste of some medicines so that children taste the flavor and not the medicine.

"A 2003 survey shows that 77 percent of Filipino mothers agree that the unpleasant taste of some medicines is the major reason for the poor (prescription) compliance among children," Dee said.

GeoGrace in talks with investors

GEOGRACE RESOURCES PHILIPPINES INC. plans to further build up its nickel resource base to take advantage of the rising world market price of the commodity.

In a disclosure to the stock exchange, Geo. Grace said it was negotiating with several producers, off-takers, explorers and investors to widen its reach in the Southeast Asia.

The disclosure comes as the Philippine Stock Exchange sought (PSE) more information about GeoGrace's plans after it had sealed two separate agreements to buy nickel mining rights in Zambales.

GeoGrace described its fulfillment in nickel mining, saying the country's deposits of nickel are one of the largest in Southeast Asia.

"Further, nickel prices continue to rise in about $40,000 per metric ton on the London Metals Exchange," the company said.

On Thursday, the company said it had signed another agreement to expand its nickel mining base to Zambales, a few days days after sealing a similar mining deal.

So far, GeoGrace—which is chaired by Jesse C. Angeles—has acquired the mining rights of Garantiere Mining Inc. for a 12,937-hectare property and the rights of Ingenito Mining Inc. for a 1,305-ha mining concession, both in Zambales.

GeoGrace, formerly known as Global Equities Inc., is listed on the Philippine Stock Exchange. The deal brings the firm's acquisition of nickel mining concessions to 16,698 ha in Zambales two days.

It told the stock exchange that it would acquire the rights either through a property-for-share swap or a share-for-share swap with these firms.

"Admission of the mining concessions will be conducted by a reputable licensor international mining consultancy," the company said.

Beatrix L. Lucas

[illegible]

Transco bidders assured of stable regulations

Mining sector seen finally taking off

NATIONAL RESOURCES SECRETARY ANGELO T. REYES is optimistic that the country's mineral sector will soon be taking off for its long-anticipated boom, which he foresees coming in 2008.

Reyes said the industry's takeoff this year had become apparent with the presence in the country of the world's biggest players in mining, including Anglo-American plc and Xstrata Copper.

"The major players are now here, and their investments indicate increased confidence of global mining investors in the Philippines," Reyes said. "This marks a significant takeoff for the industry and if this is sustained, we can well anticipate a mining boom starting next year."

The DENR chief's approval of several mining permits in the past several months was considered by investors as an affirmation of the government's resolve to promote mining.

Just last week, Reyes said he had approved the exploration permit of Manila Mining Corp. after being informed that London-based Anglo-American Plc. through its local subsidiary Anglo-American Philippines Exploration Inc., was finalizing a joint venture agreement with MMC for the exploration of the Bayugo Copper Gold Project in Surigao, Davao to Surigao del Norte.

Anglo-American has committed to initially spend $10 million for exploration works in Bayugo project in the next two years. The Bayugo prospect is similar in nature and occurrence with the adjacent Boyongan Copper-Gold Property. Diamond also Anglo is exploring under a JV with Philex Mining Corp.

ERC says there will be no arbitrary changes in the rules

By Abigail L. Hu

THE ENERGY REGULATORY COMMISSION assured the three groups bidding for the 25-year National Transmission Corp. (Transco) concession of "transparency and stability" in the country's regulatory environment.

Buying a recent bidders' forum conducted by the Power Sector Assets and Liabilities Management Corp. (PSALM), ERC commissioner Josef Del Rosario said the bidders had nothing to fear, particularly with regard to the regulation of Transco's business.

"We have a transparent and stable regulatory regime, and there will be no arbitrary changes in the rules," he said.

According to PSALM, the recent bidders' forum was specifically held to serve as a venue for discussion and clarification of the three bidders' regulatory concerns.

Representatives from the three consortia that had pre-qualified to bid for the Transco concession attended the forum, PSALM said.

One of the three groups is the consortium of Tokyo-based Feddhippo Corp. (60 percent), Malaysia's Tenaga National Berhad (30 percent) and Mitsubishi Australia PLC (10 percent).

Local firm Ayala is represented by SM Investments vice chair Hastly Ty Jr., Ecotech chairman/Cebu Light chair Jose Gotiaco Jr. and San Miguel Corp. president Ramon Ang.

The consortium of Grand Holdings Corp. (60 percent) and Texas 898 (40 percent), represented by Rogelio Singson, are still in the group composed of Manila Oriental Broadcasting Corp. (60 percent) and China's state-run Guangdong Electric Power Corp. (40 percent), represented by Walter Brown, have also pre-qualified.

The three bidders were supposed to submit their final financial and technical bids for the Transco concession last Monday, but Finance Secretary Margarita Teves and Energy Secretary Raphael Lotilla, PSALM chair and vice chair, respectively, moved the deadline to early next month.

The move was aimed at giving PSALM management and prospective bidders additional time to thrash out some important legal and commercial issues to ensure a sustainable long-term concession contract, which is fair to both the Philippine government and the bidders."

PSALM insisted behind the final bid documents on Jan. 15, the supposed deadline date.

"While it is our responsibility to privatize Transco at the soonest, it should not prejudice the quality and integrity of the process. The bigger responsibility is to protect government interests and provide a fair return of investments to the prospective concessionaire," PSALM president Theresa Dato said.

Lack of transparency jacks up infra costs

By Dorris L. Luna

LACK OF TRANSPARENCY AND INSufficient disclosure in infrastructure projects with private sector participation engender graft and corruption that work against the interests of the taxpaying public.

This said a paper prepared by the Economic Policy Research and Advocacy (Epra) group headed by former Socioeconomic Planning Secretary Cielito Habito.

"It is clear that adequate transparency and disclosure brings down fiscal and transaction costs for PIP in general, thereby facilitating infrastructure development in the country," according to the report.

"Lack of transparency and disclosure leads to those said in the cogs of infrastructure development and undermines the Philippines' national competitiveness," the report said.

The report was presented during a forum organized by Epra and the Action for Economic Reforms urging the passage of a local version of the US Freedom of Information Act.

During the forum, representatives of various nongovernment organizations, the academe, the business and the youth sector asked lawmakers to pass the proposed freedom of information act to "ensure the full functioning of (the) right to access information of public concern."

Opaque business deals between the government and the private sector—several of which have been exposed as being onerous...were frequently cited as justification for the swift passage of the bill.

In its paper, Epra said that having sufficient information and disclosure in the development cycle of a certain project ensures that the expectations of stakeholders are realistic, and that the contract and financial terms are "fiscally feasible and attainable."

UP School of Economics professor Ernesto Herrile said that this problem was especially urgent in the field of government infrastructure deals such as the private sector which are often classified as big ticket expenditures.

"Part of the problem is the lack of transparency in the deals," he said in an interview. "This lack of transparency creates distortions in how the resources are allocated."

He added that the survey that accounts many of these infrastructure deals "engenders graft" and "promotes corruption" because they are protected from traditional checks and balances.

The result, he said, is not just overpriced infrastructure projects but the failure to protect the interests of the people over the long term.

Congress urged to approve RE Act

THE NATIONAL GOVERNMENT ASSOCIation of the Philippines (NGAP) has urged Congress to fast track the approval of the Renewable Energy (RE) Act before it takes its three-month break in February.

The Renewable Energy Bill, which provides for mechanisms and incentives to accelerate the development of renewable energy resources was passed on third reading by the House of Representatives and has been on second-reading delays in the Senate.

"Given the untapped potential of the country's geothermal resources, the approval of the Renewable Energy bill can help position the Philippines as the world's No.1 producer of geothermal energy," NGAP president Glenn U. Dalde said in a press briefing yesterday in Quezon City.

The country was now the second largest producer of geothermal energy for power generation in the world. Christine A. Avendaño

Peso's expected strength seen to cut NLEX rates

Restoring the bamboo trade

By Jerry E. Esplanada

HALF THE PEOPLE AROUND THE WORLD share, to some extent, in the trade and information use of bamboo, valued at more than $7 billion a year.

Prime exports of edible bamboo shoots alone, China and Taiwan earn at least $150 million and $65 million annually. India, on the other hand, makes those $350 million in its bamboo-based furniture and industry.

In the hills of the Philippines, however, bamboo is largely ignored, although it plays such a big role in many local communities, traditions and beliefs.

Not anymore, according to Laguna Lake Development Authority (LLDA) director Edgardo Manda.

Because "we lose than First Gentleman Atty. Miguel 'Mike' Arroyo is pushing for the development of the local bamboo industry," Manda has told the bayanes.

The other tree of life

"It really complemented by [trees] around the country with its ideal tropical climate, can be a major producer and exporter of bamboo—which he prefers to call the other tree of life—and bamboo products," said Manda, also former administrator of the Ninoy Aquino International airport. "Sadly, bamboo development here still lacks the support of both the government and private sectors compared to those in neighboring Asian countries.

Manda pointed out bamboo development here "has been done on ephemeral basis.

"It is not even considered a major crop as can be seen in National Statistics Office records," he said.

Now, Manda stressed, is the "right time to step up."

Both Agriculture Secretary Arthur Yap and Environment Secretary Angelo Reyes are so supportive to the idea, according to Manda.

Strategic plan

Last last year, Manda discussed the proposal before the LLDA board, led by its chair Gov. Isabelita and general manager Calixto Trinidad.

Manda had prepared the setting up of what he calls a "bamboo development authority or council" that would coordinate the program.

"The body shall, among other functions, formulate a strategic bamboo industry development plan over the next 10 years and ensure that all bamboo-related programs will be properly coordinated and made accessible to all industry players," he said.

Manda also recalled that during a 1995 visit to China, the Vice Governor was awestruck by the sight of more bamboo forests during a 3000 visit to China."

More lphthonochor [illegible] is the most valued commercially used bamboo species in the world. Its "bamboo shelf" pole stalks are among the biggest and most beautiful, growing up to 7 inches in diameter and [illegible] to 80 feet with thorns of extremely small proportions.

According to THE CLOTHES on display are stems of bamboo fiber. The bamboo has a [illegible]. Tarzan's tensile strength greater than that of steel.

bamboo enhancing.

The silver tree of life

Laguna and Rizal lakes basin belong to the Germany-based network which groups around 40 environmentally threatened lakes and wetlands worldwide.

During the recent LLDA board meeting, Manda pointed out that "if we start a concerted effort to [illegible] the use of this bamboo should be treated to ensure because of its various uses."

"Declaring bamboo as the silver tree of life is the perfect sense," Manda observed.

Bamboo has more than 1,500 documented uses, ranging from food, medicine, toys, paper, construction materials, love musical instruments, fuel and light bulbs to aircraft manufacturing.

"Here, the plane plays a key role to many traditional ceremonies. With dances like stalking, stigid and solid wooden around the bamboo. We use them in the rural areas, it is largely ignored," said Manda.

During the past six years, the Philippines has been exporting various bamboo products to countries like Germany, Switzerland, Belgium, Holland, England, Spain, Saudi Arabia, Japan, Australia and the US and just recently, Israel, Brazil and Venezuela.

At par with the best

"Our bamboo products are at par, if not better with their counterparts worldwide. We have the technology the locally craftsmen the plant, and the labor and manpower to do the work," Manda said.

"What we lack is focus, teamwork and coordination between government and the private sector. That is why compared to China, Vietnam and other bamboo producing nations, we remain uncompetitive as far as bamboo [illegible]

A VENDOR in Iloilo City tends to the chairs, beds and rabbles on sale.

For MNTC, stronger currency means lower borrowing costs

By Michelle V. Rivera

REPORTERS PROBING TERRORISM the North Luzon Expressway (NLEX) could look forward to paying lower toll rates sometime soon should the peso further appreciate and interest rates continue to slow down.

This was according to the Manila North Tollways Corp. (MNTC), which holds the 20-year concession to operate the NLEX. The strengthening of the peso reduces the cost of MNTC's foreign borrowings, the company said.

Rodrigo Franco, executive vice president and chief operating officer of MNTC, yesterday told reporters that the firm is mandated by its concession agreement with the government to adjust toll rates every two years and use economic indicators, such as currency movement, to determine the amount of adjustment.

"There is a formula for computing toll rates," Franco said. "The adjustment is not one-time [or] recurring, upward). Toll rates could go up or down, depending on factors like improvement of the currency and interest rates."

Last December, Franco said, toll rates increased by that 30% and all classes of motor vehicles were slashed by an average of 11 percent. We class 1 vehicles, he said, toll collected from each vehicle under the open system was slashed from P62 to P56.

Franco said the reduction in the toll was made possible by the appreciation of the peso and decline in interest rates.

Last year, the peso breached the 50:$1 to reach the 49-to-a-dollar level, on account of huge inflows, mostly remittances from overseas Filipino workers. Interest rates have also fallen, with the benchmark 91-day Treasury bill rate reaching the 4-percent mark due to the government's improving fiscal condition.

Franco said MNTC was able to refinance its debts at a much lower cost due to the lower interest rate, which also helped the company minimize debt dropped in peso terms due to the strengthening of the peso.

These economic developments more than offset the drop down effects on MNTC's revenues by the lower-than-expected volume of traffic in NLEX. Increases in toll prices is the reason cited for lower than expected volume of traffic.

He said that last year, there was a daily average of only 130,000 vehicles passing through the NLEX. This was lower than the 175,000 to 186,000 vehicles daily projections with the government were still ongoing on how to implement the NLEX project.

Should the peso appreciate and interest rate slides further, he said, the firm still could again be reduced, limiting any events that would drag down revenues, such as a sharp increase in oil prices.

NLEX is considered to be the main corridor to Central and Northern Luzon. Its first phase, an 84-kilometer stretch from Metro Manila to Pampanga, has already been completed.

Filipino millers urge BFAD to examine Chinese flour

LOCAL WHEAT FLOUR MILLERS have asked the Bureau of food and Drugs (BFAD) to check the imported Chinese wheat flour, which they claim will only exhaust the country's efforts to boost the health of children afflicted children in the country.

The imported flour allegedly does not comply with the country's fortification law, which requires food products to contain micronutrient levels such as vitamin A and iron.

"The flour milling industry is concerned that the violations, if authorized, could jeopardize the government's fortification program and by so doing, could set back and retrograde your office has taken to push this worthy program into fruition," Erlo M. Pinca, executive director of the Philippine Association of Flour Millers (Pafmil) said in his letter to BFAD Director Leticia Barbosa Gutierrez.

Pinca also submitted to BFAD samples of the Chinese flour which he said contained lower levels of vitamin A and iron.

Republic Act 8976, otherwise known as the Fortification Law, mandates that wheat flour should be fortified with Vitamin A and iron at minimum levels of 3 parts per million (ppm) and 70 ppm respectively.

The maximum levels of fortification are 6.5 ppm for Vitamin A and 105 ppm for iron. Other products that require fortification are rice, salt and cooking oil.

Pinca said Pafmil had the same imported flour tested by a private company and found that it was found to be severely below the standards set by the government.

One brand of flour only has the equivalent of 48 ppm of iron and 0.253 ppm of vitamin A, while the other brand contains 0.0 ppm of iron. Vitamin A was not even detected in the second Chinese flour brand, he added.

BFAD, should verify these findings, Pinca said, adding that the imported flour should be withdrawn from the market and further importation be disallowed, if BFAD finds the products to be violating government standards.

The law, according to Pinca, directs the Department of Health through BFAD to monitor the program, formulate the standard operating procedures, and impose sanctions or violators of the program.

All importers, traders and manufacturers of wheat flour are mandated to sufficiently fortified flour. Sanctions include product recall or withdrawal from the market, suspension of product registration and fines ranging from P100,000 to P1 million.

From page B1

Both of the OFW remittances continued to come from the United States, the United Kingdom, Saudi Arabia, Italy, Japan, Canada, Hong Kong, the United Arab Emirates, Singapore and Taiwan.

Through the years, OFW remittances have made the Philippine economy more resilient to crises that could otherwise affect growth, inflation, external accounts and employment. In terms of employment, for instance, the ranks of jobless Filipinos would have doubled to 20 percent if all OFWs remained in the country instead.

Strong dollar inflows from OFWs as well as foreign portfolio investment last year propped up the peso by nearly 6 percent last year.

DTI helps RP traders in tapping US market

By Raymond W. Domingo

THE TRADE DEPARTMENT SAID it was helping local exporters tap the $34-billion United States specialty food market amid an apparent lull in demand for food that can easy to carry, have Asian tastes, and are healthy.

Trade Undersecretary Adolfo Agrenilla Bengzon, also executive director of the Center for International Trade Expositions and Missions of Commerce, said small and medium-sized food makers were well-positioned to develop niches in the sector.

Bengzon said Cimex was organizing missions to help the SMEs export to the US, and to encourage buyers and firms in the provinces of American consumers in the United States to increase their exports.

"The specialty food retail market size in the US is growing at 15.7%, primarily through supermarkets and mass merchants," she said.

Bayas said condiments were the largest in this food category at about a fifth of the specialty food sales. There are also pasta and herbs—a cultured, exotic-rich health food—followed by juices and functional beverages, of which at least a thousand products have been launched in the US alone.

She said market trends in the US include convenience foods with extreme portability and one-handed eating/drinking functions, a growing number of consumers who snack while dining; foods with Asian flavors, such as pungent of fiery and cool ingredients, sweet and spicy, sour and salty; and foodstuffs with various health benefits as 70 percent of US adults are trying to eat nutritional foods.

The Cimex chief said the agency was organizing the first Philippine participation in the FMI [Food Marketing Institute] Show to be held May 6-8 in Chicago, Illinois.

FMI has 1,500 member companies in more than 80 countries, with the US-based ones operating 26,000 retail food stores and accounting for nearly sales volume of $ 298 billion, or three quarters of all food retail stores in the US.

OFW remittances hit all-time high of $14B

Based on reality forecasts made by the 104 OFW remittances from all channels would be the $14-billion mark only in 2007, of which $13.5 billion would be routed through the banking system.

In 2000, the BSP assessed that BOP accounts that 25 percent of OFW inflows were coming in through the informal channels, defined as unlicensed or unregulated operations such as friends, acquaintances or other travelers.

The so-called leakage in the OFW remittance flows has gone down to 16 percent in 2000, and is expected to further decline to 5 percent this year, based on the BSP's latest estimates.

The BSP measures the foreign exchange transactions between the local economy and the rest of the world. Any transaction which gives rise to a payment by a Philippine resident like importation or debt servicing is a debit item in the BOP while any that gives rise to a receipt like borrowing, exporting or inward remittance by OFWs is a credit item.

An outlier study on the likelihood of remittance channels used by OFWs conducted by the Social Weather Stations (SWS) for the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas (BSP) showed that 38 percent of OFW remittances were coursed through banks, 37 percent through friends and relatives, 14 percent through remittance centers, 10 percent through money changers and 1 percent through others.

The SWS survey also showed that 38 percent of OFWs remitted their savings

Techs lead Asia stocks sell-off, yen down on CPI

SHINY REARS
Ford Escape vehicles are lined up at Royal Oak Ford in Royal Oak, Michigan. Ford Motor Co. lost $5.8 billion in the fourth quarter after swinging color-coded mega-restructuring costs, pushing the hidebound automaker's deficit for the year to $12.7 billion, the largest in its 103-year history. The annual loss reported Thursday surpassed the previous record of $7.39 billion set in 1992. AP

Chip makers post weaker earnings; China seen to cool market

SINGAPORE... TOKYO, JANUARY YESTERDAY led the sell-off in Asian stock markets as chip makers posted lackluster earnings and the yen slipped after inflation data reinforced doubts that the Bank of Japan will raise interest rates next month.

Worries that China could take further steps to cool its stock market until the economy's also hit regional bourses, most of which had posted record highs earlier this week.

"The bubble is bursting," said Shiu Ting, research director at Core Pacific-Yamaichi International in Hong Kong. "The market is still overbought despite the correction."

Financial bookmakers in London foresee the FTSE 100 index would open down around 0.3 percent.

Japan's consumer prices rose less than expected, supporting the world's second biggest economy is struggling to shake off a decade of deflation.

The data added to speculation the central bank may keep rates at 0.25 percent in February, leaving equities market last week by allowing them unchanged.

"After the BOJ's decision last week to hold interest rates, it has become more likely that the timing for further rate hikes will be delayed," said Masahiro Yamamoto, currency strategist at Mitsubishi UFJ Group.

Mixed US housing data and a jump in US bond yields also worried Asian investors, fearing about the economic outlook for the key overseas export market for the region's exporters.

"At the moment, it's looking like a rate hike may be a little more likely than a rate cut in the US, and there's not positive for stocks," said Rob Zwirb-ble, an analyst at SK Securities in Seoul. "Then, combined with talk of an impending rate hike in China, is forcing the market lower."

Asian market falls followed declines in the US, where the Dow Jones industrial average retreated from record highs, and the Nasdaq did an excessive about-face quarter earnings.

The dollar climbed to around 120.45 yen by 0620 GMT, making closer to a 5mn year high of 121.09 yen reached earlier in the week on the view that interest rates in Japan will lag other major economies for some time to come.

The euro jumped nearly one yen from the day's lows around 147.40 yen, before easing to trade around 146.95 yen.

Tokyo's Nikkei fell 0.2 percent, retreating further from a six-and-a-half-year high touched the previous day.

MSCI's broadest index of shares elsewhere in Asia was down 1.1 percent at 1020 GMT, while a technology sector sub-index slipped 2.2 percent.

Hong Kong's Hang Seng lost 2 percent by midmorning, as mainland traders fell on talk of a possible interest rate rise following higher-than-expected December inflation data.

Seoul's benchmark index fell 0.8 percent, Taiwan stocks fell 1.3 percent, Singapore's Straits Times Index was down 1.2 percent by midmorning.

Gold eased a touch to around $646 an ounce, losing ground after hitting a 1 1/2-month high at $654 the previous day.

Japanese government bonds rose after the inflation data, but renewed course later as investors worried about rising bond yields in the US and other markets.

The benchmark 10-year JGB yield rose 2 basis points to 1.680 percent. Reuters

Experience Extreme Performance with
NISSAN X-TRAIL 4WD

Special Prices
X-Trail 200X P1,200,000
X-Trail 250X P1,300,000
or as low as P89,000 DP
Also Available Special Cash Discounts
Inclusive of VALUE PLUS OWNERSHIP - FREE 1st 3 years / 60 km - 3 Year Extended Warranty, Comprehensive Insurance with Zero deductible / Loss of use / Diamond 4K Service Package
Promo Period: Jan. 15 to Jan. 31, 2007
Only at MANTRADE DEVELOPMENT CORP.
NISSAN

Oil prices up on Opec threat of production cut

SINGAPORE— OIL PRICES TESTERDAY rebounded in Asian trading after tumbling a day earlier amid re-emerging doubts that Opec members are actually making the production cuts they promised last year.

Light, sweet crude for March delivery rose 24 cents to US$58.49 a barrel in electronic trading on the New York Mercantile Exchange midmorning in Singapore. Crude prices had risen as high as US$59.98 (Manila) Thursday before settling at US$58.25 a barrel.

"The drop (of the previous day) was primarily a result of profit-taking after a rather strong price gain," said Victor Shum, an oil analyst with Purvin & Gertz in Singapore. "The up and down of the prices reflect the volatility of the market."

The Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries said it would begin cutting production by 1.2 million barrels a day in November, but some traders speculate members are not complying. The cartel said last year it planned to cut production by 500,000 barrels a day starting Feb. 1.

Earlier this month, crude fell to US$50 a barrel, but it rose about 18 percent over the past week as cold weather switched to the heating oil consuming Thaffe eastern United States.

Tanker tracker Oil Movements reported that it expects exports from Opec to rise in mid-February—easing doubts that had been allayed a day earlier when ConocoPhillips' chief executive Jim Mulva said the company was firmly committed to cash output from its Libya and Venezuela operations.

"If you look at trading this week, the market has found some support above the US$58 a barrel price mark ... It appears to have found a floor due to a number of factors," Shum said, citing continued cold weather in the US and the announcement Tuesday by the US government to double the size of its strategic Petroleum Reserves.

Analysts expect crude oil futures to stay in a narrow range of US$55 to US$61 a barrel as "traders are likely to adjust positions ahead of the weekend," says Ken Hasegawa, a broker at Rjunwest CO in Tokyo. AP

Bank of China eyes acquisitions abroad

DAVOS, SWITZERLAND— THE Bank of China is looking for acquisitions abroad to strengthen product development at home, but not strategic takeovers in new markets, according to Zhu Min, group executive vice president.

"We don't need to add assets or cut operations that the main-land's No. 2 lender was exploring buyout candidates in the US consumer finance market, saying he was now aware of talks with US financial services providers.

"If there are any opportunities abroad, we are open...we're basically looking for products," he told reporters on Monday on the sidelines of the annual meeting of the World Economic Forum held in the Alpine ski resort Davos.

The chief Singapore as one possible place where BOC, which raised a combined $11.7 billion through Hong Kong and Shanghai listings last year, would invest in firms that could expand his company's product capacity.

But when asked about talks with US firms, he said: "I'm not aware of anything, no."

Rather, BOC's home market China provided the best opportunities for growth. He said BOC's 2006 net profit was around 15 percent and could remain at that level into 2007, he said.

"This is really the best market in the world. Why should we leave this market and go to other markets where we don't know very much, with only a 3 to 5 percent growth rate and a narrower margin?" he asked. "There is huge room for product innovation."

He said BOC still had some way to go before leaving the right structure to compete on an international scale.

"We have had to build our governance structure, our risk management and about our balance sheet," he said. "However, even though we have big risks for capital-ratios, I don't think we are ready for international competition."

Turning to the economy, Zhu said China was on a more stable footing than a year ago, and that real-less economic growth was trending lower despite the fact that, unlike in the US, the country poured its fastest rate in more than a decade.

China's economy grew 10.7 percent in 2006, new data released on Thursday, as investment and exports powered ahead, despite a raft of government curbs to keep the pace of expansion in check.

The world's fourth-largest economy has now grown at double-digit rates for four years in a row. "When we move to year 2007, the most memorable foundation is better than the beginning of 2006," he said.

"At that time, we were concerned about a real estate bubble, the main industry declining to sales, overcapacity in steel and steel-types to electricity and oil," he said. "Things have been much improved than they did a year ago, but obviously there are still concerns because investor confidence is still very strong." Reuters

Upgrade to the New Year with these fantastic offers from Lenovo. Powered by Intel® Centrino® Duo Mobile Technology for a powerful computing experience, all ThinkPad® notebooks also feature ThinkVantage® technologies for ultimate performance and reliability. Find out more at www.lenovo.com/thinkoffers

ThinkPad R60
PHP72,195*

ThinkPad T60
PHP89,995*

ThinkPad X60
PHP99,995*

OPTIONS
FREE

1800 1651 0438
lenovo.com/phoffers or contact our authorised resellers today!

CAGELCO X

INVITATION TO PRE-QUALIFY AND TO BID

NATIONAL CENTER OF THE PHILIPPINES

INVITATION TO BID

TOP QUALITY USED CARS FROM JAPAN

10th Anniversary Sale!

Perfect Logistic Phils., Inc.

More CLASSIFIED ADS on pages...

RFQ	A19 & A12
RFP	A19
Sealed Proposal Calls	A19

INQUIRER CLASSIFIEDS

Ahlcon branch is open to serve your Classified Ads requirements.

AHLCON OFFICE

JOB COMPACT

Advertise in JobMarket Compact.

Inquire about the JobMarket package at 897-0000 loc. 310

Get more exposure for your ad.

JOB MarketPlace

People, Events & Products

The Columns gives another reason to love Legazpi

MAKATI: LEGAZPI VILLAGE HIGHlighted its uniqueness as it launched the "Lovin' Legazpi" campaign, a movement inspired by the globally famous "I love New York."

"Lovin' Legazpi" is a celebration of Legazpi Village's rich culture and storied chronicles. Being a community teeming with trendy bars and restaurants, shops that offer prevalent vintage finds, and nooks that serve as sanctuaries for the busy professionals, it is no wonder why Legazpi is the social and creative heart of Makati.

"Legazpi has a unique soul, character and history. For a person who is stuck in the suspense jungle that is the Makati Central Business District, it is a refreshing experience to name the unique treats of Legazpi," says Community Innovations' project development manager Grace Jao Ansa.

The Columns Legazpi Village, the newest development of Community Innovations and newest proponent of the campaign, comes with another reason to love Legazpi through the Lovin' Legazpi Privilege Card.

The privilege card serves as a person's passport to the exclusive benefits of the establishments in Legazpi. Holders of The Columns Legazpi Village are given the chance to discover the village's novelties and surprises, as they will be recipients of the privilege card.

Each cardholder is entitled to up to 20 percent discount on the Village's dining, recreational and relaxation zones.

Busy professionals who simply need time to unwind and relax can use their cards for spa treatments at the Blue Salud Spa, or they can indulge in beauty treats at salons like the Bronze Nail Salon, Optima Nail Art and Beauty Center, Cut Loose Salon, Salon de Rose, Nail Spa, or exclusive Cut Salon. They can also spend their day in silent contemplation at the cozy ambiance of The Coffee Bean and Tea Leaf or the Caffino Espresso Bar.

Cardholders who are craving for non-traditional foods can sweep by Asero, selves at Legazpi's dining haven: Swagat Restaurant, Café a Go-go, and Old Manila Café.

Discounts from Berrington Esposito Furniture, Diane Optical, Flotsam Flower Shop, Homestreams Inc, G.Men Gentlemen's Grooming, Indigo Interior Design, Rodali, Lorenla Love, Amore de Legazpida, Peralta Stones Greenbelt and Supervoy Philippines also await cardholders.

The Columns Legazpi Village is a 42-storey, two-tower residential condo at the corner of Amorsolo Avenue and Arnaiz Ave. It is a brainchild of Community Innovations, a wholly owned subsidiary of prime real estate developer Ayala Land.

The residential complex is in close proximity to about 240 office buildings within the Makati Central Business District, and provides easy access to schools, churches, hospitals and embassies.

It is also close to the internationally renowned Greenbelt mall, the country's first lifestyle center, whose residents of The Columns Legazpi Village can indulge in high-quality, specialty dining, shopping and entertainment needs.

For inquiries on owning a home at The Columns Legazpi Village, call 888-0000, e-mail tlc@ayalalandcom.ph or visit www.thecolumnslegazpi.ph

Sales agents Model units are available for viewing daily at the Sky Level 6 Gallerina 3, Ayala Center, from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. (Monday to Thursday), 10 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. (Friday and Saturday).

BLUE RIDGE EXECUTIVE VILLAGE GROUNDBREAKING CEREMONY

The Blue Ridge Executive Village in Binangonan, Rizal, is the latest addition to Sta. Lucia Realty Development Inc.'s (SLRDI) long list of quality developments. Shown in photo during the groundbreaking ceremony are SLRDI president and chief executive officer Ramon Ang (fifth from right), SLRDI's vice president for sales Marissa Sec (4th from left) and Binangonan local officials and Megaworld-backed top directors. Megaworld Properties is the exclusive marketing company for Blue Ridge Executive Village. For inquiries call 891-7000 or 661-3000.

INDUCTION OF GAWA-PHILIPPINES 2007 BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Raul B. Mahaway, LUTCF, Insular Life's district sales manager for its Makati District Sales Office, was recently inducted president of General Agency Managers Association (GAWA) Philippines. Mahaway, together with other newly elected officers of GAWA-Philippines was inducted into office recently by Insurance Commissioner Evangeline Escasinas. During his one-year term, he vows to put into practice the GAWA principle of "Growth through Sharing." Photo shows the 2007 GAWA-Philippines Board of Directors being inducted into office by Insurance Commissioner Evangeline Escasinas (extreme right). From left, Anita Cleopas of Sunlife, Socorro Villamor of Fortune Life, Soledad Pagaru, LUTCF of Insular Life, Arabella Bonnevier of Sunlife, and GAWA-Phil. president Raul B. Mahaway, LUTCF of Insular Life.

Brother Phils presents Innobella

BROTHER INTERNATIONAL PHILS CORP. A LEADER IN home and business IT peripherals that focuses on the 'customer first' approach, proudly announces a brand new range of genuine ink and paper called Innobella, derived from the words 'innovation' and 'bella' (Italian word for beautiful).

Based on extensive research and development with user conducted on over 100 different elements, Brother developed its cutting-edge technology to couple its new range of Inkjet Multi Function Centers (MFCs) that will ensure reliable operation and protection of the Brother machine and its print head.

The secret to the success lies to the following enhancements in print head and memory color technology. With Brother's commitment in producing highest quality products that can be enjoyed by everyone, Brother incorporated the amazing 1.5 (picoliter) ink droplet technology normally found only in high-end inkjet all-in-one, to the comprehensive range of new generation inkjet MFC's.

1.5pl ink droplet technology closes ink droplets gaps and allows the capacity to accurately place these droplets in paper. When used with Innobella Ink & Paper, printouts will have less graininess, greater sharpness and clear definition.

Adding to the mix is Brother's new Memory Color Technology that mimics the way people perceive color in real life as it is ingrained in flesh memory. Incorporated into each Brother machine is a database of true to life colors. Every color in an image is carefully matched against the database colors to close the right blend of inks to ensure the most spectacularly realistic printouts.

Innobella Ink and Paper are lab tested to ensure ensuring that prolonged exposure to light and moisture will not cause printouts to fade with time. Innobella Ink also contains carefully selected chemicals to prevent clogging of the print head for smoother operations. This ensures reliability and durability of the Brother machine.

Printing with Innobella Glossy Photo Paper will result in high quality prints with richer colors, sharper images and better definition. This is attributed to the unique chemical formulation causing the paper surface that reduces ink bleed.

Color Rich, a natural photo color technology expands the color gamut by broadening the color reproduction area, increasing the tonal shades of the different colors and giving more dramatic shades.

Innobella Ink and Photo Paper are available through Brother International Philippines exclusive dealers or you may call Brother Helpdesk at 581-9000 or through the mainline at 581-9500.

PETRON XTRA MILE CHALLENGE MEDIA EDITION

PHILIPPINE HEART CENTER

Letran in Bataan celebrates foundation Anniversary

SPUM College and HS Alumni

Ampalaya: Getting back into the game

By Charles E. Rukan

IT WAS EIGHT YEARS ago when Charanzia, a product by Herbicure Corp., became the country's first ampalaya tea to be registered with the Bureau of Food and Drugs.

Within the next two years, the tea made from 100 percent dried fruits of ampalaya (*momordica charantia*) became so popular that other brands joined in, further embracing the bitter herb to its targeted market composed mostly of diabetics.

According to Lito Alolarda, president of Herbicure Corp. and also the Chamber of Herbal Industries of the Philippines—an association of local manufacturers of herbal products—the ampalaya food supplement industry has come to a beginning or annual sales of at least P700 million, accounting for 26 percent of the market for diabetes medicines (total market for vanilla and other hypoglycemic oral products in the Philippines is P1.9 billion).

Alolarda added that even on the export scene, the ampalaya tea has become the hottest herbal product of the Philippines, thus, paving the way for establishing the country as a reliable source for that product.

Halved

But the industry's growth showed down considerably when in June 2006, the Department of Health reclassified ampalaya from scientifically validated to tentatively validated medicinal plant.

It was also a complete turnaround from a 1995 DOH circular, which listed ampalaya as among the 36 herbs that had been scientifically validated and which the department had been promoting as adjuncts to treatments of various diseases.

"The announcement caused confusion and it was uphill battle after that for the chamber which engaged in the food and to reconvince authorities and the public about ampalaya as one of the medicinal plants that is scientifically validated for use as alternative medicine, and that ampalaya has a long history of use not only as a food but also as a prescription agent into that lowers blood glucose levels," Alolarda said.

He added that the chamber was still careful in its pronouncements, reiterating that its products should only be used as dietary adjunct in the treatment of type 2 diabetes and that their diabetic buyers should still continue taking their doctor prescribed medication.

"Recommending the authorities as well as the public will take time," Alolarda admitted. "However, I strongly believe that things would change for the better soon, especially in the light of

AMPALLETE. In broth a nutritious vegetable and a traditionally trusted medicinal herb.

A BOOMING ampalaya-based product could give SP farmers profitable source of income.

the Bureau of Food and Drugs' recent announcement regarding the Charanzia," he said.

Reclassified

Recently, the BFAD reclassified Charanzia from just more food supplement to food for special dietary use (of diabetics), the first product in its category to be afforded such classification.

"This reclassification by the Department of Health's key regulatory agency should confirm the tea's dietary benefits in controlling the blood sugar of diabetics," Alolarda said.

He informed that last August Herbicure sent to BFAD a reclassification request and included several publications as basis: 2003 issue of Philippine Journal of Internal Medicine that featured Doctors Reynaldo Rosales and Ricardo Fernando's clinical trial involving Charanzia; ampalaya use 2004 review article of ampalaya's potency by Dr. William Torres, whom he presented before the 2004 World Congress on Anti-Aging Medicine in Las Vegas; and a 1995 issue of Phytotherapy research publication providing coverage on the use of the field of the pharmaceuticals industry's that featured the review article of Doctors A. Raman and C. Lau, from the Pharmacognosy Laboratories, Department of Pharmacy at the Kings College in London, United Kingdom, titled "Anti-diabetic properties and phytochemistry of Momordica charantia L., a review of over 100 preclinical and clinical studies on Ampalaya's anti-diabetic properties and phytochemistry."

> The reclassification should confirm the product's usefulness in the prevention and control of diabetes

Welcomed

The move was also welcomed by Dr. Caio Abad, past president of the Association of Municipal Health Officers of the Philippines (Ambap), saying that the reclassification should confirm the product's usefulness in the prevention and control of diabetes.

Ambap is a national medical organization that runs the country's public health centers, and has been recommending Charanzia to their diabetic patients since 2003.

"Perhaps, this recent BFAD announcement on Charanzia will pave the way for other similar products to be reclassified as such, but more than such reclassification, I hope that the scientific community would take notice of this development and plan for more trials that would finally end doubts about ampalaya's efficacy against diabetes," Abolarde said.

But on the other hand, he also believes products like ampalaya tea should take a different path that new pharmaceutical drugs are now undergoing for it to be approved for use in the general population.

Said Abolarde: "There should be another way—other than a box-phase-double-blind, which is extremely long, costliest and very expensive to undertake—that would establish products like ampalaya tea as proper yet safe option in controlling diabetes. This is certainly one of the mistakes that the chamber is looking into."

GEOTHERMAL POWER

Mining heat stored in rocks in the Earth's crust could meet a growing portion of U.S. electricity demand researchers say

China observations

LAST YEAR, RYAN DYLAN 12-young, my former student, who enrolls in math, asked me for advice on how to handle technical training for a company in China. Since the employees were not used to the English language, I advised Ryan to put simple English words and illustrations. Happily, Ryan reported that the training was successful. He also sent me some observations about his experiences, which I felt were not only interesting, but were also useful to readers.

China is the rising power in the region, and probably the world. One reason for this is the country's great work and science, which contributes to the quality of its workers. Here is a firsthand account, by Ryan Lleong:

Thirst for learning

At first, the Chinese personnel were not receptive how but I spoke. But surprisingly, when I made an effort to speak to them in their own language, they eventually got used to it. I sensed their genuine thirst for learning, an attitude I rarely observe here in Manila. Their level of English proficiency was not enough still to Answer questions, but they managed to conduct basic conversations with me. Therefore, a knowledge of the politics, culture, and of course, mathematics, required the assistance of Microsoft Word's Chinese thesaurus or PowerPoint 2000.

Good English skills are required for call work because all of documents are in English. Thus, all employees in the course are required to have passing marks in CET3, an exam they take right after two years of university work. The reasons that the employees is skilled enough to communicate with native English speakers. They also required to learn more English from me, as I ended up speaking English most of the time. They were so eager to learn that I decided not to speak Chinese at all.

Proficiency in math

The employees were exceptionally well versed in math. My trainees lived up to the Chinese reputation in this subject. I asked them to write a function that would give the nth term of the sequence (1, 2, 3/2, 2/3, 3, 4, 3/2, 2/3, ...) which was a method for enumerating all positive rational numbers. I had given this same problem to some trainees in Manila, and it took them around two hours. My Chinese trainees needed it in a matter of minutes! Their basic sense of pattern was impressive. Based on my observations with them, I sensed that the Computer Science curriculum of Chinese universities was solid. And math was many much more so. Their courses surmounted the math courses I took at the discretion. The depth of their math was also certainly not trivial. Their books always included adequate proofs for computational theorems. When I browsed through their books, I became engulfed in college nostalgia.

Their good theoretical training might have contributed to the ease of their transition to working during training. I was often asked questions starting with "Why?" The trainees were so eager to learn the theories and opinions behind every concept I threw at them. I felt like all average, being squeezed to a point that I enjoyed the discussions of mathematics with the assistance of PowerPoint.

Astounding economy

The promise of progress is being realized in China at this moment. The Chinese economy is growing at an astounding rate (10 percent every quarter). My trainees shared that the most in-demand university degree in the Province is Mechanical Engineering due to the proliferation of manufacturing plants in the region. More opportunities for these engineers will come as the development of the northwestern provinces continues. The need for upbringing is a top priority of the government. The country is trying to evolve the old manufacturing industries of this area into things.

China is becoming very powerful, and I am thankful to have had the chance to work with some of the people. I was close, but many times remote, and I have made good friends, so for the Philippines, though, we should be prepared for China's emergence. As for me, I think up on my bicycle.

Most important equation

My colleague, Erik Magi, sends us this reminder from his genius. The four mathematical equation. I have ever seen is: 1 Love +1 Hole = Agenus. God's love is infinite.

* * *

Queena H. Lee-Chua is a graduate of mathematics and psychology at Ateneo de Manila University. Contact her at bluebook@pdi.net.ph.

Doc Willie and Liza

By Robert R. Castillo, MD

AT A TIME WHEN THE MORALE of the medical community seems to be at its lowest, with doctors shifting to nursing as a move to counter severe pain, hospitals in financial difficulties, and a malpractice law looming in the horizon, the Bituneseos of Idealism and Nationalistic Doctors (BINDO) comes as a soothing balm to beleaguered young doctors.

Our young doctors are increasingly confronted with a degree of uncertainty, dictated more by lucky breaks rather than merit or skills. As a neophyte practitioner mostly patiently in his new clinic with patients coming in infrequently, he can't help but wonder in his mind with the inevitable questions of whether or not to jump ship and try one's luck abroad, as situation one's Hippocratic oath and pledge some to the highest earth.

Refuge for young docs

The BINDO offers a refuge for these young doctors. It is an advocacy group to support and guide young and even not so young doctors. It helps them find a path through the narrow straits they find themselves in. Ever since BINDO started, I have had the pleasure of talking and planning the lives of dozens of residents and young doctors. I count it a great privilege and opportunity to help them find their niche," says Dr. Willie Ong, who cofounded BINDO together with wife Liza and Dr. Philip Uy, a pediatrician at the UP-PGH Medical Center.

For several years now, Willie and Liza have been invited by various medical colleges and organizations nationwide to speak to their students or members. They even give their cell phones and e-mail addresses, so they can be in constant touch with those who want to consult them about their studies and their career. The couple guides these medical students and young doctors as they map out their purpose in life, and live according to their precepts. They encourage them to do what they enjoy doing regardless of monetary considerations. And judging from the overwhelming response to their invitations to speak at various gatherings during the annual conventions of MMG, I'm sure they have touched the lives of countless aspiring doctors who may have had second thoughts about their chosen course.

Louie May, now on his junior year at the UP College of Medicine, has written a book and published it, thanks to the encouragement and guidance of Willie and Liza. The book on AIDS awareness and gay life realities, is now available at the National Book Store. Incidentally, Willie and Liza are the coauthors of at least six medical textbooks, the most popular of which is the Medical Blue Book, considered the must-have "peripheral brain" of medical residents during training.

TV shows

Willie and Liza have also ventured into television as they can reach more people they can help. They now have two television programs. One show is "Doc Willie and Liza" which runs on IBTV every Friday at 1:30-2:00 p.m. with replays on Metro Ilocos at 8:0 a.m. The other, "Ang Bidadalyang Dakota," shown on NBA channel 4, is more of a reality show wherein Willie and Liza react on indigent family with urgent medical problems and treat them, for free, medicines, all for free.

Willie and Liza really take pains in preparing for these TV programs. And they've got it down easily to become famous TV personalities. "I have one simple goal," Willie says. "... and that is, to help one to two persons per show." Judging from the many letters that BINDO duo has been getting, they are touching the lives of a growing legion of viewers who are now more empowered with the health information they get from the show. "That alone is worth all the efforts and preparation time we do for the show," Willie said Liza say.

Biblical secret of success

Once, a consultant asked Willie and Liza why they're doing all these, and his response was simply answered: "We believe in the Biblical secret of success: what's says, 'Give first with no thought of reward: in return.' God will provide you with all the blessings and 'blessings' are such—to help more people, to alter their lives for the better. And if we help our young doctors (who are) the future of our country) are set out among the lives of thousands of Filipinos, then so be it!"

If we hear someone like this from young doctors like Willie and Liza, we feel so much about the future of health care in our country.

SCIENCE/HEALTH

Editor Cesar D. Hangoway

Arthritis sufferers in RP to exceed 2.6M

By Tessa R. Salazar

THE DEBILITATING, agonizing pain of arthritis and rheumatism is such that sufferers sometimes prefer death over a lifetime of misery. Couple this with the disturbing trend that the number of arthritis and soft tissue rheumatism sufferers is predicted to increase, and experts are warning Filipinos to take a closer look at themselves and examine their risks of developing the disease.

The Philippine Rheumatology Association trained Owl the number of arthritis sufferers and those with soft tissue rheumatism, which now stands at 2.6 million adult Filipinos, will rise to the average life span of Filipinos increases.

Not the only causes

Dr. Evelyn Dela-Addala, president of the association, said that contrary to the myth, aging and a high protein diet are not the only causes of arthritis, and lack of exercise also is to blame.

Arthritis is commonly defined as a disease of the joints, while rheumatism is differentiated from the former as a disease of the structures around the joints, such as muscles, tendons and ligaments.

There are a hundred types of arthritis, and the cause can be due to heredity, trauma, weight, abnormal metabolism that attack the joints, infection or an infection. Addala added that high uric acid levels, food fungus and a poor diet can precipitate gout (also called metabolic arthritis). Gouty arthritis can lead to kidney failure. A rheumatoid arthritis sufferer's life span is shortened by at least five years.

Rheumatitis, on the other hand, is usually caused by minor trauma that is encountered in repetitive daily activities. Addala cited examples of the situations to include a 26-year-old working in an air-conditioned environment such as a call center experiencing back pain from her muscles, leading to spasm, or an 18-year-old student who finds pain in the thumbs and fingers due to constant texting. Many senior people have a common cause of repetitive motions, and wrong hand positions and improper posture while on the computer.

Weight and posture

Those who are aware that they have a family history of arthritis are advised to maintain their ideal weight, as well as good posture.

Dr. Jules Gonzalez Pesayco, former president of PRA, added that they should take every alcohol, especially beer, and every red wine.

They should also avoid food higher high in uric acid such as small fishes (dilis, tawilis, tirapia, tamban, dilimang, pata, lapu-lapu, etc).

Mushrooms, mongo beans, asparagus, peanut, eggplant and shellfish are to be taken in moderation.

Dr. Lyndon Llamado, a fellow of PRA, said everything should be taken in moderation.

Gout, he described, is one of the most painful types of arthritis. In extreme cases, a person suffering from gout cannot even stand to let a blanket touch the affected area.

Exercise

Buenaga urged people to exercise to prevent or at least delay the onset of arthritis. "Exercise tones muscles around joints. Even if arthritis is inherited, food, rested and healthy muscles help maintain joint motion and lessen the pain this suffering."

"Stop smoking," she added. "Rheumatoid arthritis and Buergers disease are associated with smoking."

Individuals are urged to consult a dermatologist early if they have a family history of arthritis. "Seek medical advice first before resorting to herbal medicines since many of these carry side effects," Buenaga advised.

Addala said many forms of alternative treatments are not backed by good scientific evidence. "The same hope that we see in our search for scientific evidence that medicines work in should be applied in supplements and natural products," she added.

Addala noted that natural supplements can also affect how other drugs work. She cited ginger, which has been found to lower one blood clotting and increase the risk of bleeding.

Dr. Michael Tee of the PRA also said the early signs of arthritis and rheumatism should not be ignored, as even aside to the medical expense of treating the diseases could run up to as much as P300,000 a year.

Smoking may trigger rheumatoid arthritis, lupus

By Tessa R. Salazar

SMOKING MAY TRIGGER ARTHRITIS, Dr. Michael Tee of the Philippine Rheumatology Association revealed during a recent Philippine College of Physicians forum that smoking may trigger death of cells in the lungs.

Different studies on arthritis done over several years drew a strong association between smoking and rheumatoid arthritis and systemic lupus erythematosus, particularly for people with strong genetic predisposition for these two diseases.

Effects of smoking

A group of Swedish rheumatologists found the effects of smoking on the development of rheumatoid arthritis and systemic lupus erythematosus in those who already have predisposition to these two types of diseases. Arthritis may occur earlier for them," reports Evelyn Dela-Addala, PRA president.

Rheumatoid arthritis affects the different joints of the body, particularly the hands, wrists and feet. This is characterized by pain, swelling and stiffness of the joints that is more pronounced in the morning.

The PRA quoted the 2003 National Nutrition and Health Survey estimates that there are 2.4 million adult Filipinos have rheumatoid arthritis.

Systemic lupus erythematosus is a condition where the body system itself, resulting in full-blown inflammation that may potentially affect the entire body.

ST. LUKE'S MEDICAL CENTER

St. Luke's Is Better Equipped Than 95% Of US Hospitals.

Accredited by Joint Commission International Since 2005

Cutting-Edge Technology That's A Cut Above The Rest

Nowadays, every medical center in the country claims to have world-class medical equipment. St. Luke's is the only medical center in the Philippines that has the distinction of having the widest range of the world's best medical equipment.

Known for its aggressive acquisition of the latest and most advanced medical equipment, St. Luke's is the most technologically-advanced medical center in the country. It is the ONLY hospital in the Philippines equipped with PET scanner, 3-Tesla MRI scanner, combined Gamma Camera SPECT/CT system, Intensity Modulated Radiation Therapy (IMRT) with Respiratory Gating, Comprehensive Picture Archiving and Communications System (PACS), Virtual Histology (second generation Intravascular Ultrasound or IVUS), and the first Flat Panel Detector Cardiac Catlab system and 64-slice CT scanner, among many others.

Only the best can make you feel better.

St. Luke's Medical Center
One of the world's best

Better staffed and better equipped than any other medical institution in the Philippines, now or old.

www.stluke.com.ph

279 E. Rodriguez Sr. Blvd., Quezon City 1102, Philippines Tel: (632) 7230101 / 7230301 Fax: (632) 7231199 E-mail: info@stluke.com.ph

PROPERTY

Editor Cesar D. Mangosing

AMONG HIGHEST IN ASIA

RP property values can increase 35%

By Tonz R. Salazar

A SENIOR ECONOMIST of the Global Property Guide, advised Philippine property buyers to consider the long term whenever they're making their choices. And by the long term, it's envisioning where they want to live or work, or retire 10 to 20 years from now.

Prime Cruz pointed out to the locators that most developers will add landscaped plots with lot "nature views." However, the area might be "green" but now simply because there are no other houses.

BW/B2

Manhattan Garden City
AT THE ARANETA CENTER

A Matchless Location at the Metro's Center.

Go from home to the heart of the action in no time. At Manhattan Parkway, the first phase of Manhattan Garden City, enjoy the benefits of living in the country's first ever transit-oriented development. Experience the freedom to go places with utmost ease via the LRT-2 and MRT-3. And reach the north, east, west and south sides of Metro Manila in one go. What's more, be a walk away from the Araneta Center and its shops, offices, restaurants and entertainment hubs.

Surrounded by the city's key destinations.

Your Parkway home is encircled by everything the city has to offer. And you're just a train ride away from it all. Walk down an exclusive **720-meter-long garden boulevard** four stories above street level. Take in its park-like scenery. And arrive at the LRT-2 and MRT-3 stations safely and without the hassles of traffic.

From the LRT-2 along Aurora Boulevard, Antipolo and UP via Quezon City and Manila's commercial belt are just minutes away. The MRT-3 along EDSA brings Makati, Ortigas and Taft Avenue within easy reach. Both lines join up with the LRT-1, making it easy to go anywhere from Monumento to Cubao to or Baclaran in Pasaypan.

Surrounded by the Araneta Center's hot spots.

Be in the middle of a pulsating lifestyle and leisure center: the Araneta Center. From your home, a four-story **transfer station** with a hotel-style lobby, grand staircase and fast passenger elevators brings you to the third level of Gateway Mall, which hosts the Ultra, a unique flooring garden. From here, simply walk to the Araneta Coliseum, 18 to Araneta's 500, Shopwise, Ali Mall or Farmers Plaza.

Surrounded by the comforts of home.

When you're done exploring the world outside, your home is just a breath away. Whether it's an executive studio or two-bedroom suite, **Manhattan Parkway** offers you soothing views of the Araneta Center and Quezon City. What's more, enjoy lots of active play at the fourth level garden deck. There are facilities, walkways, jogging trails, a fitness station, an indoor exercise and a gym. And if that's not enough, a world-class health resort plus amenities at the upcoming phases.

Visit our SHOWROOM
at the third floor of the Gateway Mall.

Joint Venture Partners:
Araneta Properties

Exclusive Marketing Agent:

Developed by:

Mega World Corporation

A FIRST from Megaworld
in cooperation with Security Bank!

Own a Manhattan Parkway condo with HOMELITE

MEGAWORLD HOMELITE
A NEW ERA IN AFFORDABLE HOME FINANCING

Celebrate the New Year with the most important decision of your life.

Own a luxurious studio at Manhattan Parkway for as low as
P10,246 a month fixed for 20 years.
Choices from our revolutionary, budget-friendly packages, including HOMELITE 10, HOMELITE 15 or HOMELITE 20.

For more details, inquire from our HOMELITE specialist. Call 810-3333 now.

Tile Art and Architecture

THE ART OF CERAMIC TILE PAINTING HAS its origins in the Moorish trade (the Moors conquered the Spanish realm over 700 years ago). The Moors made their Muslim decorations with pigment first seen in ancient mosques of the same name. We still see traces of this art form in the Alhambra, Granada, the ruins of Toledo and the architectural finds of Seville. The skill seems to have been perfected in Persia, where the intricacy and vividness of design first peaked. The very term for tile comes from the Latin word, tegula, which means baked mud. It was used widely in the French word, tuile. Early examples of this art can also be seen in China, originally used as gifts and offerings to royalty and their deified ancestors. In the Muslim culture, ceramics have been widely used by the Moors to adorn their places of worship, and eventually their homes. Its structures in Spain and Italy, it is found as an integral architectural piece, even to this day.

Artist at heart

In the Philippines, Bo Santa Ines Agoza is one of continuity in the art. He is an architect by profession, just like his father, but has been married to Nita Marasigan for the past 18 years, and, despite his humble denials, he has always been an artist at heart. He was my schoolmate since grade school at the University de Manila University and through college at the University of Sto. Tomas, where he has received almost a penchant for art. Bert resides in Laguna, heading most rooms credence to the distinction of the land he emigrates to for his area. However, he insists that he does not have the temperament of an artist, only the passion.

Like most successful ventures, Bert's passion started out of a need. He was looking for accent tiles for a house he was designing but was not satisfied with those available to the market locally. The clients requested to buying and hand-carrying the tiles from Europe. Although the quality was acceptable, the designs did not satisfy him fully. This prompted him to study how to paint. He then himself create his own designs, and experiment on the procedure.

Tedious process

He discovered that ceramic tile painting is a tedious process. One would need a considerable amount of patience and dedication to create products like these. It is not enough to learn the technology behind it. You must learn the talent to be able to maximize the potential of this art form. While painting on the tile surface, you do not see the final outcome. What you initially get are dull hues. It is only after baking that the vivid colors come out. It is not enough that you know the process of the painting. Oxides and chemicals, which produces the colors, must be mixed precisely and carefully to achieve the effect you desire. Therefore, one would likewise need significant experience, combined with vision, to produce the perfect art piece.

Creating the art canvas is a learned, mass-produced exercise. Each finished tile is a one-of-a-kind piece, imbued with time, skill and imagination. Every tile would certainly add value to any home. It can be employed as architectural element or as stand-alone piece, finding its way as embellishments, religious icons for altar tables, decoration for small trays, or even as house numbers. I have seen these beautiful tiles used as tabletops, murals, framed hangings, and accent pieces, among others—practically anywhere you can see a tile.

Bert says there is an endless choice of subject matters to paint. He, however, likes to create Philippines images and new takes on religious items. He claims can also decipher the theme and he develops it based on what their want. The choice of colors would likewise depend on where the tile art is to be displayed.

Appreciates in value

Like many art pieces, the art appreciates in value. The designs are unique and can be personalized to the client's liking. With proper care, it can last for more than a century, if not for centuries. What a novel way to distinguish a home or set it apart. Tile art can lend an area a distinct and memorable character all its own.

Bert regularly holds exhibits, showing off his selection at art cities in popular galleries and ateliers. He is currently preparing for a scheduled show to start September at the International Gallery in Greenbelt, Makati (a consortium for artists in Greenbelt). For details on the exhibition and his works, you can get in touch with him through text at 09163507277.

Tile art is a wonderful art form, both as facilitat to the ambience as it is finds to present-day viewers. It can be up the back of a viewer's jump out at you as an accent piece. It can hold a valuable niche in a family's treasury of memories. It can also be an exceptional gift for someone special.

"LEONARDO daVinci," a Filipiniana art piece

"DAMA de Noche," mother and child tile art

ARCHITECT Bert Agoza, the tile artist

Maurice de Guzman Jr.

LIVING ARCHITECTURE

SPECTACULAR fireworks display was among the highlights at the Paseo 3 grand launch party.

Spectacular street party marks Greenfield City's Paseo 3 grand launch

IT WAS A SCENE REMINISCENT OF A COLONial fiesta: fancy party with live music performances, yet domestic, spectacular fireworks display and yes, signature breads to boot as Greenfield Development Corp. (GDC) celebrated the opening of Paseo 3, the newest retail strip of Paseo de Sta. Rosa.

The successful launch party, graced by Sen. Pia Cayetano along with Laguna officials—newest Dr. R. Joaquin representing Governor Teresita Lazaro, Gov. Teresita "Singaling" Lazaro and Mayor Arlene Arellano Nazareno—kicked off with live dance from Tribu Manila, followed by a contractual piano-bar breaking participated in by the VIP guests and Greenfield Development Corp. key executives led by general manager Lawrence C. Ong, and vice president Diana Sarona.

Newest retail strip

The country's first outlet superstore and urban lifestyle mega mall of Metro Manila now boasts of a bigger, more exciting range of shopping, dining and entertainment choices with the new Paseo 3. Right at the heart of businesses Santa Rosa in Laguna and part of the interchangeable to and from Metro Manila, this Paseo is now an a must-visit shopping destination for residents of nearby Calamba, Binan, Biñan and Tagaytay areas. From Metro Manila residents need to this leisure center as it is only 45 minutes away from nearby Makati City.

Vice Chairman Ong explains, "This is an exciting day for us because we know Paseo 3 will further enhance the wonderful community of Sta. Rosa. Rest assured the city government will continue to support GDC development, programs and activities in the future."

"I go kidding to this work and Paseo de Sta. Rosa is a favorite stop for me and my hiking buddies," Senator Cayetano, a regular at Paseo De Santa Rosa also revealed. "The great thing about the place is that it embraces businesses no matter how small to medium; it provides opportunities for homegrown businesses to thrive. Your next Paseo 4, all the more reason for us to come!"

Novel options

With the opening of Paseo 3, Paseo de Sta. Rosa is poised to offer more options to visitors shoppers. The additional strip of retail shops and establishments provide visitors with easy, convenient access to a wide array of lifestyle choices. Culinary choices include favorite haunts such as Tapa King and Brothers Burger, and more recent dining destinations like Bench 101, Starmoon, Dobie Donuts & Japanese Restaurant, Takeshi Restaurant, ICM Japanese Restaurant, Mokai Chinese Restaurant, Jesquito Mia, Babycakes, Rice Bowl, Michelli's Calamch Pastries and Lamsam Bar.

THE TAPPING of the symbolic can signals the formal opening of Paseo 3.

Completing the phase is a wide array of retail establishments for basic and specialized needs, like that A Beauty Mart, Cyberzone, Shop 'n' Tell Puero Hills Care Clinic, Hospitalian Spellar Ortho Dental Clinic, Tom N' Stella Salon, 900 Degrees Spa, Headspot Salon, Bonito's Barbecue, Nino Lopez Internet Café and Bank of Commerce.

Welcome don't

The expansion of Paseo de Sta. Rosa reflects the city's fast rise as one of the South's most progressive cities. As Governor Lazaro recalled during Paseo 3's launch party, "Santa Rosa was once dotted [also] by rice fields and sugarcane fields. Ngayon [today] ito ay isang [is a] progressive, world-class city. Thirty years ago, walang [there was] Paseo de Sta. Rosa. Ngayon [today] ito ay isang [is a] thriving city. Dito [here] sa Santa Rosa, [We're very happy that everyone has joined us in celebrating the opening of Paseo 3, a true symbol of Sta. Rosa's progress]. We hope that local officials, investors and residents will lend together for the continued progress and success of the city."

Lawyer Jocson, son of Laguna Congressional Ocon Jocson, shared the locals' enthusiasm, saying, "Paseo 3 is indeed a welcome development in Sta. Rosa, a major investment in the city that we are truly proud of."

For more information on Paseo De Santa Rosa and Greenfield Development Corp., please call 420-8000 or (049) 541-2845, e-mail marketing@greenfield.com.ph or log on to www.greenfield.com.ph.

FROM LEFT are Sta. Rosa Mayor Arlene Arellano-Nazareno, Gov. Projects Caminero and Laguna Gov. Teresita Lazaro.

RP property values can increase 35%

From page B1

Winners try to imagine what the place will look like if there are a thousand more like you buying a house in that area. The green, refreshing view would probably be lost," Cruz said.

He stressed that there are also huge costs attached to buying and selling houses.

"In the Philippines, it can reach up to 15 percent of the property value, one of the highest in Asia, because of this you, brokers, to effect, and a "No Return No Exchange" org. Unlike other goods that carry a service warranty, houses don't. Once turned over, all the risks are for you and repairing the house will be paid by the new owners," Cruz said.

Floods

Cruz warned buyers "not take their agent's words as gospel truth."

If the agent says that it never floods in that area, you cannot complain to him/her if it actually does when you start living there.

There are also no guarantees if the agent promises that the neighborhood is safe, and that a new church, school, mall and mall will be built nearby in the foreseeable future.

The agent might also promise you that your prospective home's value will increase tenfold within a few years. Again, there are no guarantees. Experts warn from the future since shows that the value of luxury condominiums in the Philippines fell by more than 50 percent from 1997 to 2000 (http://globalpropertyguide.com/articles/Philippines-Property-Investment-Report.php?article_id=1&sid=4).

Travel time

"The amount of travel time stated in many property developers' brochures are often underestimated. It might be a 30-minute drive from Antipolo to Ayala-Ortigas, if said only if there is absolutely no traffic (which happens only during Good Friday). Commuting time should be considered instead. Even if you have your, but all your friends and relatives do," Cruz said.

It is also wise for the buyer to visit the house at different times of the day. The quiet neighborhood that you first visited might be noisy and smoke filled during peak traffic hours or noisy and unsafe late at night.

Cruz cautioned buyers that other warnings that might be downplayed by your agent or developer are the risks of earthquake, landslides and flood.

Least efficient

A news release by Global Property Guide last week pointed out that the Philippine housing market is Asia's least efficient. Exceptionally high tax, transaction and other costs discourage the processes of housing, and the Philippines' home price to income ratio is very high, to comparative terms.

"The market cannot efficiently provide housing, if it is riddled with unnecessary costs," Cruz said. "In the Philippines, the second-top transaction costs of buying and selling a property can easily reach 15 percent of the property value because of the 12 percent VAT. This is on top of the capital gains tax and 5 percent agent's fee."

Study

In a study involving a detailed comparison of housing purchase costs in Asia, the Global Property Guide found a clear correlation between high transaction costs and unaffordable housing (measured by house price to income ratio).

The news release pointed out that in Manila, Jakarta, Shanghai and local condominium prices are much higher (measured by house price to income ratio) than in developed countries, it stated that houses are to income ratios are generally regarded as the best measure of housing affordability.

The Philippine government's tax-everything-in-sight policy helps no one, according to the Global Property Guide. "To avoid the capital gain tax, as property owners in the Philippines prefer tax payments to lower the appraised value of the property. This doesn't help the government collect taxes. It may end in a town-statement.

"Similarly, high transaction taxes suggests that reducing transaction taxes actually increases compliance and the government's tax take."

Global Property Guide also pointed out that the Philippines' outdated cadastral system also greatly increases legal costs, the report adds. Only 10 million of the Philippines' estimated 20 million land parcels are registered. It takes an average of 10 years (where completed) to register a property.

The Philippines also has the highest number of procedures involved in registering property, followed by Indonesia and South Korea. Both these factors increase legal and estate agent's costs, especially for high-end properties where the risks are higher.

New York inspires Manhattan Garden City

ENJOY LIVE, WORK SUBWAY TO THE SOUTH

Soon, Manhattan in New York City hosts a flurry of activities as "The city that never sleeps." People walk at every corner to ride back at the nearest subway station. Bars and restaurants in and out of restaurants. Shoppers flock to the streets of 59th Avenue, while those who want to spend time alone or with their family members troupes Central Park.

This scenario will soon be emulated right here in the very heart of Metro Manila with the Araneta Center—the country's very first Manila and leisure center. Five hectares of the 20-hectare prime property will soon transform into Manhattan Garden City.

A GARDEN setting as the podium deck provides a nature-centered amenity area.

THE ONE-BEDROOM unit is a big hit among homebuyers.

QET a preview of the luxurious Manhattan Garden City lifestyle in this two-bedroom unit.

Characteristics of Manhattan

Going by this new city's very auspicious name, top developer Megaworld Corp. planned and designed its interior to reflect the characteristics that make Manhattan renowned the world over. Manhattan Garden City's first phase, the three-tower Manhattan Condominium, has been carefully planned such that give a distinctive look to the new skyline and give it a more dynamic silhouette. Its colors are warm and striking to reflect the upbeat character of the new location. Certainly, Megaworld Central Properties Inc. president Katherine Chuidian (pic shown).

As to planning this new city, "The range of amenities we considered are consistently true: an access, community integration and urban transformation," he stated.

Boardwalks connect the residents of all the residential towers of Manhattan Garden City to one another and to the area's main tenant amenities—the LRT2 and MRT3 stations. This makes Manhattan Garden City the first and only transit-oriented development in the country that boasts of direct connection to the two transit systems, thus making going around the metro a breeze for residents.

Characteristics of Manhattan

Going by this new city's very auspicious name, top developer Megaworld Corp. planned and designed its interior to reflect the characteristics that make Manhattan renowned the world over. Manhattan Garden City's first phase, the three-tower Manhattan Condominium, has been carefully planned such that give a distinctive look to the new skyline and give it a more dynamic silhouette. Its colors are warm and striking to reflect the upbeat character of the new location. Certainly, Megaworld Central Properties Inc. president Katherine Chuidian (pic shown).

As to planning this new city, "The range of amenities we considered are consistently true: an access, community integration and urban transformation," he stated.

Boardwalks connect the residents of all the residential towers of Manhattan Garden City to one another and to the area's main tenant amenities—the LRT2 and MRT3 stations. This makes Manhattan Garden City the first and only transit-oriented development in the country that boasts of direct connection to the two transit systems, thus making going around the metro a breeze for residents.

neighbors can exchange pleasant stories and children can make friends. There have many activities to choose from: swimming in the lap pool, reading at the benches, jogging at the winding paths, or billiards at the game room.

More than building towers, Ayala hopes that Manhattan Garden City will transform the Araneta Center into a world-class residential area, with strong emphasis on nature-centered amenities that dissipate the feeling of urban congestion. "The Araneta Center has a great number of shopping choices. With the new Fiesta Forum, it will also host world-class office buildings and even a hotel, which altogether contribute to bring about a good quality of life for our residents," he shared.

Sold out

With all these project advantages, it is no wonder that Manhattan Garden City's first tower, which features close to 500 studio, one-bedroom and two-bedroom units, was recently sold out. "Thus, we are launching Tower 2 immediately to make more and more people live in and experience the vibrancy of the new Araneta Center. And this will be easy for them to do with thunder, which offers low interest rates and terms up to 15 years to pay," he announced.

Both prospective and home buyers can check out the Manhattan Garden City showroom at the 3rd level of Gateway Mall or call 633-3333 or e-mail inquire@fortunechurningcenter.com for a viewing appointment.

Creba-La Salle real estate, environment planning lecturers

THE CHAMBER OF REAL ESTATE and Business Associations (Creba) and the De La Salle-College of St. Benilde School of Professional and Continuing Education (DSCE) announced the lecturers for the course on "Real Estate and Environmental Planning" for professionals and real estate developers and allied builders as part of a postbaccalaureate diploma program in real estate management. It will be conducted every Saturday from Jan. 27 to March 3 in the 9th Floor, CSB International, of Conference Center, Estrada St. cor. Arellano St., Malate, Manila.

The course is designed for developers, landowners, city and community planning officers, engineers and other professionals, said Roque A. Magno, overall program coordinator. Here is a preliminary lecture at the University of the Philippines School of Urban and Regional Planning and former commissioner for planning, zoning, housing and land use regulatory Board (HLURB).

Lecturers

Among the lectures are Magno's discussion and concepts in regional planning; human settlements; and land use planning concept; comprehensive land use planning; engineer Cynthia B. Bautista, chair, School of Urban and Regional Planning and former commissioner for planning, zoning, housing and land use regulatory Board (HLURB).

Lecturers

Among the lectures are Magno's discussion and concepts in regional planning; human settlements; and land use planning concept; comprehensive land use planning; engineer Cynthia B. Bautista, chair, School of Urban and Regional Planning and former commissioner for planning, zoning, housing and land use regulatory Board (HLURB).

architect Ma. Victoria B. Arroyo, DPA Associates; Leagues of Cities of the Philippines strategic planning; urban planning context.

Other lecturers are Cesario Ilao, manuel Diaz and Prof. Oscarito Limbaro, IUP HSDP; Comprehensive and infrastructure; lawyer Amado P. Valdez; lawyer Ma. Cristina Armamento, public domain utilization and protected areas; engineer Sixto L. Sebastian Jr. EIA director; Environment Management Bureau Region 4; Department of Environment and Natural Resources; Delia Jarel, director, Mandaue Band; Urban Sector Services, Philippine planning system; Prof. Ernesto M. Serote, director for training, UP SURP; plan implementation in the Philippines; and Dr. Salvador van Devender, chair, Concept Inc., past Cebu national president, urban planning professors in the Philippines, and international consultants.

The nine-course modules include an overview of the real estate markets and practices, and real estate laws and regulations. The program covers six modules initiated in 2002, the program is open to persons and would be practitioners in the real estate business and service industry. For inquiries, e-mail spacialdiv@slu.ph; or visit www.slu.edu.ph.

Aqua Guard Elastomeric Waterproofing Paint
Premium Elastomeric Paint
Universal Paint

macnell architectural paints
ACRYL COAT
ACRYL MEL
MAGNEEL AQUASEAL
ACRYL CAST
ACRYL MAX
Eliminates Concrete Seepage 100% Waterproof!

For better DOORS & WINDOWS.... insist on British Design uPVC only from
Vignet
The most preferred Fabricator / Installer...
Northstar Interiors Corp.
Tel/Fax 645-3067, 910-5068
Cellfone (0915)283-3107, (0922)800-9061 to 5

100% WATERPROOF
Flexseal Elastomeric Paint
NO.1 Elastomeric Paint in the Philippines
Now available in 10 colors
Available through dealers nationwide

MIGHTY DOOR
A NEW DIMENSION IN PVC DOORS
• Thicker panels
• Thicker walls & ribs
• Enhanced weatherability
• Extra thick panel & jamb reinforcement
• High impact resistance formulation
• Extra strong thicker jambs
• Bevel faced jambs
EMERALD VINYL CORPORATION
AVAILABLE AT ALL LEADING HARDWARE AND DIY STORES

Invitation NOT to bid.
• Only 10% Downpayment
• Balance up to 15 years
• Lowest interest at 10% - Fixed for 10 years
• Amortization patterned to your needs
New listings every week!

Developer sees 2007 as another banner year

NOT only building residences, Century Properties has also included developing sprawling commercial projects like the Canyon Ranch in Carmona, Cavite.

By Charlie S. Baker

IN LESS THAN TWO DECADES, Century Properties has become the largest privately owned real estate outfit in the Philippines and with its trademark fully fitted and fully furnished developments, the company is now being recognized as one of the most dynamic in the industry.

"Next we celebrated our 20th anniversary last year, we considered it our most productive considering that by the year's end, the company has sold more than a thousand units, totaling to sales coming of over P5.2 billion," said John Victor Antonio, Century Properties managing director and COO.

Antonio is so confident that he sees 2007 as another banner year.

"The signs are very clear. The economy is at its most stable in recent years, the peso has reached its nine year high, inflation rates have gone down to a manageable range, and even the international market's assessment of the Philippine economy is quite promising," he said in reference to Standard & Poor's positive commentary in the Asia-Pacific Macroeconomic Overview as said ZDC Outlook that mentioned a higher economic growth rate awaiting the country this year.

Indeed, with these developments, Century Properties was able to simultaneously develop projects all over Metro Manila as well as in the neighboring Cavite province and sell them in record time.

"We now have Soho Central in the Ortigas Business Center, the first-ever townhouse-oriented development in the country, the Grand Soho Makati on Yakal Avenue, the only fully fitted, fully furnished condominium that offers three exceptional interior design options, the South of Market at the Bonifacio Global City in Taguig, and the Carmel Ranch in Carmona, Cavite, the first PEZA integrated residential community in the country," enumerated Antonio.

He also reported that in December last year, the former International School Manila property located on Kalayaan near Makati Avenue was officially turned over to the company.

"The company envisions a completely new urban experience to rise in that 4.8 hectare property. The development will be appealing linked-in space integrated with residential, corporate and retail components and will be masterplanned by the same architectural genius behind Battery Dirmuth, the last Singstar Olympics, Rappongi Hills in Tokyo and Bellagio Fountain in Las Vegas," said Antonio.

Antonio added that with the buying power that Filipinos whether working abroad or those actually based abroad play their respected steps in the Philippine real estate market, he is confident that Century Properties will again report a very good outcome by year's end.

CENTURY Properties promises to continue delivering innovative projects like the Grand Soho Makati along Gil Puyat Avenue.

Home bathroom: one's sanctuary

BATHROOM IS AN ESSENTIAL ENTITY OF one's home. Most of the architects and designers comprehensively thought about what approach they should take to come up with a bathroom design that matches their clients' interests and lifestyle.

Bathroom is not like any other part of a home; it is considered as an extension of one's individuality and preferences. Most people try to make their bathrooms as similar as possible from their way of life. You will be surprised when you go to your friend's house and notice the resemblance of his bathroom design with his lifestyle.

Individuals with an active lifestyle are more eager to rush home and relax those tired muscles acquired from stress at the workplace, school or wherever the pressure is experienced. For some, a simple bath and refreshing shower will do all the works. Refreshing bath or a revitalizing shower is enough to make a person step on top of his form and dance even there is no music playing. That is the magic of bathroom! It is a sanctuary for those people who wish to be just themselves and be comfortable from head to toe.

Spa at home is possible without having to spend that much. Scented candles, bath oils and aroma can make bathing more sensual and invigorating. This is commonly referred to as aromatherapy. This therapy is proven by experts to have related benefits to a person's physical and psychological well-being. It stimulates the mind and boosts the physical process of a person. This accelerates the relaxation of body and brings back the resting system back to its track.

Bathroom fixtures play a major role to making the bathing experience more inviting and energizing. It creates or breaks the whole idea of accessorized bathing scenario. Investing in a good quality fixture will save you money from repairing services and spa treatments from the salons. Authentic and superior product functions are the main traits of such fixtures.

HCG, the leading brand of bathroom fixtures, offers wide array of fine looking and modern fixtures. HCG products are well categorized to adapt to different lifestyles of an individual.

SuperCountdown
18 days 'til V-day!

Super

style . urban living . pop culture . entertainment . recreation

Mamith Pure Natural Goat Milk

Photography by BOBBY YSCUSA

Pepe Diokno Spaces Out page C3
Tals Diaz gazes into the future page C4
Janine Dario and Paolo Reyes plan your week
Gino de la Paz page C4 invites you to rock for a cause

The word according to Venus

WHEN THE OLD REPUBLIC of Rhyme turned down and Samsam E. really closed its doors, some heroes like local spoken-word movement to slowly fade away. But thanks to the efforts of poet-lyricist Rody Vasco and his "Noontaong Himas" albums (spoken poetry set to music and read by a slew of celebrities), women continue to find a myriad of venues to voice their souls for a worthy cause.

On Sunday, Jan. 28, yes Venusweek+ holds a Premier Island and of contemporary Filipina poets—Aimee Marcos, Kenni Kasanova, Charina of Marikha, Bebe, and Annabel Roach—in a stirring

Paolo R. Reyes
Janine Crespo/Inquirer

spoken word session, "Sinta Dilan x Bbs," at Conspiracy Cubao Gallery, 199 Maginhawa Ave., Quezon City, phone: 433-2178.

Singer-frontman of the renowned 10-piece performance poetry group, Apples & Snakes, will have a special performance, so be followed by music from The Bourgeois. The show starts at 7 p.m.

If you like what you hear, make sure you grab a copy of the "Noontaong Himas" CD. A portion of the proceeds will help benefit the Women's Crisis Center, an organization that extends its services to abused and battered women.

Other Super! 24/7 events:

Jan. 27, Saturday

DJ Rody Vasco Live! at Embassy Club, Ortigas Ave Extension, across SM Mall of Asia, Pasay City.

Jan. 28, Sunday

Venusweek+ Sinta Dilan x Bbs at Conspiracy, Sinta Bassel at Cubao Exp., Rhino Tinta Lounge, and The Ambassadors at Sagada. Edo Perlo Marcelo & Dan Dominguez at JBFC Soundspace/Edo at Embassy Corner, DJ Kevin Ruiz at Mezza, Nonie Habitat at Cabarets, Rouge Lounge in Cebu at UE Cafe Cebu and Hermes

MAE RYMOND DY

Conceptis Sudoku

by Dave Green

	8	3	1	4				
				5				2
								7
			3					4
2	6						8	1
1					9			
5								
6				9				
				6	7	1	9	

Difficulty Level ★★★★

©2007 Conceptis Puzzles, Dist. by King Features Syndicate, Inc.

Answers to previous puzzle

5	3	4	7	9	6	1	8	2
2	1	8	3	5	4	9	7	6
9	6	7	2	8	1	5	3	4
4	9	2	6	1	5	7	6	8
1	5	3	9	6	7	4	2	8
8	7	6	4	2	8	3	5	1
6	2	1	8	3	5	6	4	7
3	4	9	5	7	6	2	1	5
7	8	5	1	4	2	6	9	3

Difficulty Level ★★★★

SPACE INVADERS. R) Ludovico, Carrie-Ann Mar and JM Rodriguez

PAIRINGS. Spanish flamenco superstars Isaac and Mina Arbo dancing it out with Astrid and Herman Cronings

INTERGALACTIC WAX. Brazilian boys love Space Ibiza

PARTY INVASION. Marielle Zamora, Lou Pa, Noel Wilde, Wendi Cinghoa Ikcard Chin Yan

THREE STARS. Tara Tankersley, Mica Mendez and Sassy Rodriguez

GET ABDUCTED by DJ Sir Plomo

SPACE COWBOYS. Joann Salvo, Helena Bellanca, Sajan* and David Miles and Hannah Cruz

Space in, spaced out!

Space Ibiza crashed into the World Trade Center and abducted Manila's partyphiles

COUPLE CONSTELLATION. Michelle Fuentebella and Erik Dee

HANDSOME. Will Bermudez

OUT THE GALAXY. Yours truly and Rupert's Yan Diaz

WELCOME IN PEACE. Jhoni Epperson, Tina Tolo, DJ Marcion, Miguel Rivadeo and Jackie Cuison-Antonio

HOTO SHIP. Mia Concepcion

PARTY BANDOL OF Bayaz and Chaine Sierra

SHOOTING STARS. Steven Mendez de Castro and Kreg Zobrist

By Pepe Diokno

THERE ARE A FEW THINGS every party-goer must do before his life ends. One of these things is a trip to the club that's probably the closest to heaven. It's a trip to a place where people party literally nonstop, where rare overnight guests by wireless world-renowned figures wearing magic behind turntables, where DJs like Girl Gee, Kosha, Virth, and Neil Oakenfold, have played impromptu sets. It's a trip to a place called called Space. And unfortunately for us, it's all the way in Ibiza.

But Manila's fun-seekers stayed hard for Space, and the party gods answered. Last Friday, Manila and World Nitelife brought Space to our World Trade Center, which was one stop on The Space Ibiza World Tour, and was packed with almost of the city's hottest people.

The time Space spent with us was short but chilling event. The night started with DJ Kosha Kim, who got the crowd wild and amped for renowned DJ Sir Plomo. Sir Plomo is a resident DJ at Space, his name means "grenade" and that's apt for someone with the uncanny ability to mix an awesome array of musical styles in one hot song, perfectly balancing electronic and instrumental music to give Manila a fantastic taste of Ibiza, hosted by some of the all-time light stars.

One in the crowd, lovely Veronica Gonzalez Velez, in the words of Bono, "Wowowowee," as there are huge volume drinkers inspired anymore, while a Veg Mingo posted above gave girls heels, dropping fairly hefty Get your premium Moet Veuve and Absolut® glasses in those who were just blessed for much, it was a memorable night—in real, yeah, it was no less an extremely inspiring. But the party ain't an emotional and repetitive—but all of us who take partying seriously (or, as we're so serious as a party can be).

But remember, Rupert, we don't have to wait until a big club comes to town...we're one of the biggest and hottest people in the world. Let's become Ibiza, and make our own Ibizan wave. If we keep doing that, a few years from now it will be us touring the world. The Embassy World Tour? That sounds Rupert.

FAMILY FUN ADVENTURE IN HONG KONG

Sy Family Takes on Hong Kong!

A world of fun awaits families in Hong Kong, and this is exactly what the Sy family from the Philippines learned as they represented the country at the 2006 Discover Hong Kong Family Fun Adventure Challenge

The Road to Hong Kong

Hong Kong Here We Come!

HEADBANGER'S BALL. The Rockenpark series reenacts rock anthems, all for a good cause

GETTING THEIR HEADS IN THE GAME. Kleenwax's Mark Bunsoy and Rock Ed's Greg Bailey

Rock your playground

And get all one screame for a really, really good cause

By Gino de la Paz

ANYONE LOOKING TO SHADOW Pinoy rock heavyweights will feel like he or she has stumbled backstage—or an extremely sweaty VIP room—at Rockenpark. Oh, lookie! is that Yael Yuzon of Spongecake? And Mark Escueta of Bloomsapp? And Hayden Labog of Meta License? And, like, non-alarming title thief like wedding entertainer Queenmedes? Well, possibly. And only if you show up at Rockenpark at the Eastwood Central Plaza on Monday.

A first of many staple by the band folks at Rock Ed Philippines (I say, slapin' 'em overhead and "baby"-hipsin), the Rockenpark series reenacts legendary rock concerts before. But never impromptu, the awesome project turns rubbing it—cinema—Cast Brack. Wa, too, can set in these good karma points by taking part and donating now at previously owned sports equipment for public school kids across the country.

We took our mini-Olympics kicked off last November with a 5-on-5 basketball challenge and a roll call that your BC readers are only dream of. Spam, Chicken, Sandwich, Grey-hounds, Pickled Hats, Pinkish, and Pandays to Edgar were just some of the industry good guys who came out to play. Starting January 29th, 2007, Rockenpark will become a regular rendezvous filled experience, taking place every last Monday of the month. For this second leg, we open the floor of Rockcenter Saga Project, Strawberry, Session Road, and Mayesmine to bring their A-game.

HOOP DREAMS. Ming Alkuino of Sandwich and Chicken

CHILLIN' IN THE PARK. Diego and Mike of Sandwich, Nic of TEN, and Vic of Pulsed Hate

Rockcenter happens at the Eastwood Central Plaza at 6 p.m. on Monday, Jan. 29. Special thanks to Lifetime and Tandler by Sparway Enterprises. For more info on rockenpark and other Rock Ed projects, visit www.rockedphilippines.org.

Friends and benefits

LOOK you support and meet-cute the East-wood Central Plaza tomorrow, Jan. 28 [edit: my advice backpacks] for "LET'S A fundraising concert to the Barefoot Ex-Inmates' Banyuna Wind Donkey's Edge, Kamikaze, Monologue, Kyleenchie, Gamepanda, Chicken Unchained Crew, Star Light, Cynthia Alexander Dreams, and Soapstrike. The festival starts at 4:30 p.m. so we can have no excuses; contact Lil Studio at 891-8888.

FUTURISTAS

"Sometimes I dream about reality"

—Mama Chan, "Ms. Bobby"

OUT THE WINDOW

Tats Diaz

IN MY FAVORITE CAFÉ in the city two Tarot card readers offer their divination services twice a week. Since the calendrar year turned double-O seven, however, they've had more clients waiting in line than on the opening day of Krispy Kreme in Manila.

The library-eyed, fatigued users awaited all afternoon 'til last night, keeping up with the demand of customers seeking portents of their fate in the coming year. With five hundred pesos a pop, I actually wondered why I did not consider honing my skills in the Tarot line department.

Auto, future, luck, love, destiny—the ex-subsidiary words of the future obsessed, or as I'd like to call the masters and disciples of the great unknown nonsciences, the "Futuristas."

Future obsession

Two Futurista friends of mine started comparing notes on their respective fields of the last year, about what came true and what failed to transpire. My gay friend shared that his new neighborhood was really good, because he told him that in his past life, he was broke. "That would explain my affinity for Coach," he said. His last manghuhula failed miserably, he says, as, because a supposed inspection done in last year's prediction, he still produces a baby. Imee, a winning lottery ticket, or an appointed seat to the United States to watch Madonna in concert. That's why I say to keep the questions real high, it's better to give a "bittersweet" rather than a bold prophecy. Great expectations can be cruel, after all. On the other hand, you can't go wrong with just live because people manage to find connections to their present conditions, so I can imagine all those girls who were told they were Cleopatra in their past lives justifying their inner diva.

The gay Futurista friend continued, "I'm also supposed to die at 50." Furrowed brows and clasping jaws came, until he assured us, "but I'm not worried, at least I'll be prepared!" He has about two decades left to catch Madonna in concert before his day of reckoning.

My other friend then told of her one fortune telling encounter. Having cheated on her desk one day, she found an old sheet of paper that outlined her then-future years ago. She was clueless to Madame Tarot-Queen prediction, but after she left the shop, she got country and found her account drained, and she really did end up marrying a tall, fair-skinned foreigner (Frenky).

And what about me? Though I am a big fan of mystery and speculation, I guess some ourselves in certain circumstances. I'm not an fanatical about having my destiny plotted out by a stranger. I'd anger that my otherwise stable mind went, time at the turn of the century when a palm reader told me that I was an entertainer in my past life (as in, she's mind-boggling a date, but seriously, same bit of info I use to get out of small talk situations). A few years before that forecast, in the streets of Iloilo, a cupped old watch-reader told me I'd be married twice, famous, and "fly-fly" whatever that meant, in his English was rusty. Recently, when someone told me that he could hook me up with a woman who can reveal my animal spirit, I politely declined, for I already know that my animal guide is a bird.

Destination: destiny

What set me off on that Futurista part of town is my Election with Feng Shui and the Zodiac. I'm like the patient who knows a well-perscription over a doctor's diagnosis. I keep up with the headlines of my horoscope, and like being aware of those unfavorable times when shopping is impossible. Though my readings may not usually, I do take note of some of the more positive signs or a guide. Perhaps there are necessary illusions that propel me through the randomness of existence. I just believe that we greater forces in the universe that see the grand design.

So why do we put ourselves or the throes of the unexplainable? What is such to help ring our hair? Because skepticism fails in our very crucial aspect about living—it fails to give us hope.

We like to believe we are destined for greater things. Part of the human struggle is trying to understand the mystery of our desires. In the universe of possibilities, it is only natural for us to look up and try to read the stars, to attempt to fill in those gaps of logic, or find answers in the darker places of our minds. Sometimes, we find of formation in those services where the light of scientific logic is dim, perhaps because we believe that our fates rely on logic or forces that are set it.

Predictions and science should not give us the answers or remove our fears among on a goal, or to start living alive today. If a fortuneteller said you had twenty years more to live, how would you fill the infinite moments—with resignation or revolt?

What is destiny really but a decision we make, and is only as who can steer ourselves towards it. Others can prophesy by saying "you will," but the time has come to say to myself, "I will."

The word according to Venus

From page C1

A Tete Boho at Temple Club to celebrate it. Jesus at Prince of Jaipur. Drag-on Saturdays at bed

Jan. 28, Sunday

Peter Pans at CCP Main Theater. Ateneo Fest Festival at Tiendesitas. Mandarin Oriental Jazz at Jazzmanik. Jo Marshall at CCP. Any Sunday church at Victor Liberio at 8th Cafe

Jan. 29, Monday

Rockfest's Rockin Jam 5 feat. basketball, futbol, and tennis at Eastwood Central Plaza (1 p.m. Alfonsetapia). Poetry with a Blend. Bogie Pedalasco at British Council. Kamikaze & Mono-mania at Monologue. Bogie Mondays at Bogie Mondays at Lindsey Cuisine. DJ BC at Session. Retail. Oriental Bodegonsalud Health.

Jan. 30, Tuesday

Kate Servidas. Pananda. Cherry Confidans. Pumping Photo. Scorchies. Gambler, and Monster 88 at Tequila. Valerie Rueda at DJ Mynkel Dance at Lindsey Cuisine. Sybelle at City Lights Mobile & Point of Mantis. Sunrise at Cafe Provence Concert.

Jan. 31, Wednesday

Up Sharma Grace & Panunda at Ula Bistro. Jessy Internet at Swiss. Rainbows Eyes. Geek-ing festival, and Cosmopolitan at Tequila. Lush. Smooth Pitch at Ronins. W Wednesdays at 9:30. Ate Ty & Dos Guinyos at Embassy Cuisine. Eric Stara Miranda & Johnnyrose at Embassy Club. Sexy Digital Kids Mobile. Millennium at 3:30 pm. Ornata at Monday. DJ Bronzard & Orchestra at Prince of Jaipur. DJ Bell at Bonnetmont. Act. Night at Bag and Cash. Ram Cabanayan at Cantinetta.

Feb. 1, Thursday

La Luna Loca at Nino Mendoza at Mezza. Jazz Sessions at Jazz del Prado & Hospitality at 88 Cafe. Dreamingo Revival at 45 Bistro Place. Whatever Thursdays at Sinaloa Mexican Cuisine. Thursdays at Soundground Bistro. NAF at Magnet Cafe. Twenty Three days of Bed

Feb. 2, Friday

Latin Cruise Start at 8:30 Kiel Ty & Paolo Dr. Soffital Pedro. Run Hiking Society at Metro Run Cross Down Friday at Bangar La Dominicana. Circadian rise. Echoed Innocence at Ally. Ed Tony Dance at Mezza. Xavier Sessions at Fortress Mall. Mall Mall at 88 Cafe at Cafe. Soul Food at DJ Power at Ng & Bliss. DJ Mark Garcia at Embassy Cuisine. Jazz at Cafe Social & Mitchell at Temple. The Jambo at The Bistro. Ula Scandalmark & Jessica at Prince of Jaipur.

Schedule may change without prior notice. For more information and a complete listing of events, text 24-7 info through your mobile phone and send to 2805 (Globe) and 2805 (Smart). Log on to mag24.7.com or pick up your free copy of 24/7 MAGAZINE. Email 24/7 at fun@mag24.7.com and suggestions around the city. Submit your schedules before Tuesday to event@mag24.7.com & mag24_7@yahoo.com.

SATURDAY Special

Editor Nestor U. Torre ● Assistant Editor Rito P. Asido

Why Jan Nieto has the XYZ factor

By Ria Valencia Perez

ERC, 9, 2006, ARANETA COLISEUM, "Philippine Idol" finals:

The stage is dim. The sleek silhouette of a young man dressed in a dark suit steps onto the edge of the stage. A mismatched pair amazes from a crowd of thousands. They chant "Jan Nieto! Jan Nieto!" The young man recognizes us, raises the microphone, and lights up with an incandescent smile. The crowd roars again. True perfect moment. Jan Nieto, the unpredictable, unmistakable Jan, is here.

Improbable star

An improbable star, because, just eight months before, Jan was climbing the corporate ladder. Jan dreamed of joining singing contests, but could not quickly because of his age. He longed to become a singer, but kept that secret from his family of successful professionals.

His parents are both medical doctors, and his four older siblings are in various distinguished occupations. His mother, Elsa de la Rosa Nieto, is the assistant undersecretary of the Department of Health. When Jan learned of "Philippine Idol" early 2006 and found that he could make the age requirement, he took the chance to pursue his dream.

He recalled in "Philippine Idol," "one needs to have the attitude and stamina not just to deliver the goods in terms of great performances week after week, but also to withstand the pressure of hectic schedules, intrigue, criticism and personal issues. Jan Nieto's first love for anything remarkable who once considered his competition."

Gina Shahgaldi is a tall, Eurasian looker, an experienced theater and local performer. Rina Hinoveles is an experienced local singer and "producer-friend" singing contestant, having joined many contests. Jan had zero professional experience, no formal voice training, and could not read notes.

Passion

Backstreet to Dec. 9, and Jan Nieto delivers the first of the three elongated performances of the evening, soaring levels higher in energy, passion, and delivery ...and on this most critical night, executing his magnificent, MTV-ish interpretation of Rina Hinoveles' heart-tugging performance "Tell Me Dave," which justifiably clinched his fate the first Philippine Idol title.

Jan Nieto must have once spell over the audience that night, silencing all nervousness. Jan had previously mastered emotions of love in performances over and over, not once perfect. This night, all of Jan's songs were succinctly flawless, and his movements flowed creatively beyond that. Jan was poignant, eloquent, masterful, buoyant. Full of magnetic musical bravado, Jan's unrehearsed yet elegant performances evoked the charm and effortlessness of a Gary V or Martin Nievera.

How did he do it?

Family of supporters

One would have to take a look at his family. Beginning with mom and grandmother, Mrs. Socorro Nieto, a former schoolteacher. He still lost his first cousins. He saw video taught him all the important things in life, including the value of practicality, hardwork/honesty, sibling rivalry, among others. One of Jan's greatest regrets is he is not being able to support his grandmother's Cola before she passed away in her sleep two years ago.

Jan's father, Jean-Antoine Jan redeemed a love for singing, volunteered to find CDs of songs his son needed to study. If Jan memorized the medley's contained in a certain color, lawyer Ed Marte, Jan's brother and his wife Cecilia, would arrange to have it ready by the time Jan got home.

Jan credits his siblings with being devoted to help fulfill his dream by assisting with logistics and finances. His brother, who was a constant promotion during elimination shows, even ran a marketing campaign that vie shows to watch the finals at home "Yan finali niya Fpjes."

Stunning improvement

Perhaps by research, Jan is disciplined, hardworking, unfailingly patterned, creative, ... focused, cultic, ... hard-working. Jan achieved the stunning improvement of his craft. "From 0 to 100" as Judge Ryan Cayabyab put it, within a very short period by rigorously applying a systematic process. His analytical, very aspect of the competition, mulled over his strengths and weaknesses based on judges' comments, formulated strategies on specific goals and followed through on those goals.

Staunch simple, but this process requires discipline and very close, astute thinking. In fact, it's management or organizing, despite how the Answer may have helped him sift through the chaff.

Jan, while being very low-key about it, was famous for acts of compassion among his fellow contestants. On the results night when four finalists would be paired down to three, the audience could see Jan hugging, comforting, whispering to Mica who had wanted to cry in the crowd with him in the hot spot, succinctly that he could be on the

STORY, D2

PHOTO: As the Araneta Coliseum too Dec. 9, as incandescent singing star was born.

MMTA

METRO MANILA THEATERS ASSOCIATION

MOVIE GUIDE

NOW SHOWING

THE MOST CONTROVERSIAL FILM OF THE YEAR

3 GOLDEN GLOBE NOMINATIONS

BEST PICTURE

BEST ACTRESS BEST SCREENPLAY

SAN FRANCISCO FILM CRITICS CIRCLE

BEST PICTURE

Little Children

Kate Winslet Patrick Wilson

NOW SHOWING

POWER PLANT CINEMA

Rockwell Center, Makati City

BLOOD DIAMOND

NIGHT AT THE MUSEUM

BABEL

DEJA VU

LITTLE CHILDREN

NIGHT AT THE MUSEUM

R18

THE HIGHEST GROSSING HORROR TRILOGY EVER!

AN EYE FOR AN EYE A TOOTH FOR A TOOTH A LIFE FOR YOUR LIFE.

SAW III

NOW SHOWING

2ND WEEK!

"A HIGH OCTANE-ACTION SUSPENSE THRILLER!"

"AN EDGE-OF-YOUR-SEAT THRILL RIDE."

DEJAVU

"SO GOOD, YOU'LL WANT TO SEE IT TWICE."

PG-13

opens jan. 31

WEREWOLVES vs HUMANS... WHO WILL SURVIVE?

FROM THE PRODUCER OF "UNDERWORLD"

BLOOD & CHOCOLATE

Why Jan Nieto has the XYZ factor

From page D1

chopping block himself.

Great guy

Amalou Chavez, president of Ichiko management company, the artist manager appointed by Presidentiables to manage the career of the top three winners of "Philippine Idol" observes, "I'm finding out Jan is a great guy. He loves his family, he's easygoing—I'm starting to really like the guy."

TV and stage director Freddie Santos says Jan definitely has the "XYZ" factor. "If movies are appeal, Y means the measure for Jan's star-dom are clear in terms of his talent and abilities, and Z means Jan is trustworthy enough to take home with you. If I were Mother Lily, I'd sign him up, asap!"

'Kilig' factor

Sandra Chavez agrees: "Jan is wow, gasapin! Girls? Poopin the lahodenest, but Jan has a huge kilig factor with women. He gets up on stage and the women scream his name!"

Jan still seems bewildered at all the attention from the ladies. He insists, "Girls have never been attracted to me before! Seryoso! I don't consider myself a lady-magnet."

In fact, Jan has tremendous presence on stage, with a model's physique, and elastic, handsome Filipino features, dark deep-set eyes, sunlit brown skin, chiseled jaw and a disarming dimpled smile.

Concert

Chavez, the manager instrumental in the careers of music icons such as Bob Ledesma, Gary Valenciano, Zsa Zsa Padilla, and Sharon Cuneta, hasn't lost any time building Jan's budding career. She is in the midst of firming up an album deal and endorsement deals for Jan.

Jan will be performing in the "Hind 12" "Philippine Idol" concert on March 23 at the Araneta Coliseum.

Chavez reckons: "Jan Nieto was the biggest surprise on Philippine Idol. He really wanted in the competition. The essence of Jan is that he is a very good singer ... I'm very excited to manage him!"

ALL awards goes to Lolo Feliciano Pastor, says Jan.

To view videos of exclusive interviews of Jan Nieto, go to www.philippine idol.com.

Finding solace from pain

LOTUS POND

R. Valencia and Y. Bismark

WHEN WE EXPERIENCE PHYSICAL PAIN, consider these thoughts:

1. Pain and material pleasures have a beginning and an end. They don't last forever. The human body is temporary, but his soul is eternal.

2. The law of karma says: We reap what we sow. We shouldn't blame God or the world for our actions. We always pay our dues.

3. Life is precious. The goal is to achieve self-realization. Even when beclouded, a person can meditate, pray, engage in spiritual discussions, and chant the names of the Supreme Being. Spiritual progress is possible even when physically disabled.

Heartfelt service

4. Learn to see what's available. If your feet are useless, use your hands. If the body is paralyzed, utilize the mind. Use what you have to serve the Supreme Being, and He will accept your heartfelt service. He doesn't look at the quantity of work that you do, but at the loving devotion that goes with each offering. Please Him, and your life will become perfect. You'll find no greater achievement or better happiness in life.

5. Don't dwell on the pain. It will always be there. Focus instead on remembrance—it goes beyond all forms of pain and misery.

6. Offer your sacrifices to the Supreme Being as you find solace in His feet—and your heart will find peace and tranquility!

NOW SHOWING

Pitt paces 'Babel's' awards-worthy cast

By Rito P. Avila

"Babel"

Dir: Alejandro Gonzalez Inarritu

S: Brad Pitt, Cate Blanchett, Said Garcia Bernal

USING THE BIBLICAL MYTH, plot of the Tower of Babel to examine the cause and effect of human action, Alejandro Gonzalez Inarritu ("Amores Perros") brilliantly weaves a disturbingly provocative drama about an immense shooting incident with far-reaching actions of global proportions.

A trip by ballet star American tourist, Susan (Cate Blanchett), when on a holiday in the African continent with husband, Richard (Brad Pitt) as a desperate move to save a marriage on the rocks.

Their two children, nanny of gastarbeit, Ammel and friend, who pulled the trigger by accident, are perceived by local authorities as a premeditated terrorist attack that sets off a series of events that ripples around the globe.

Interlocked in the socio-political frenzy that results from the shooting are the stories of Moroccan Amelia (Adriana Barraza), the nanny of Richard and Susan's kids; and Japanese teenager, Chieko (Rinko Kikuchi), the deaf mute daughter of the man who gave the contentious rifle to Hunted and Yussef's friend, Abdellah, as an act of kindness.

After her employers refuse to give her the day off, Amelia, along with reckless nephew, Santiago (Gael Garcia Bernal), definitely takes her words on a trip across the Mexican border for the wedding of her son.

Brisk editing, sparkling photography and a first-rate script add power and dramatic punch to the brilliant director's production.

His parent are mentally-challenged, with Richard and Susan's relationship nearing perfect matters (the last two have Oscar nominations to show for them).

Inarritu's film his conspicuous entry with thought provoking existential musings and a startling cinematic structure that's not small-potato that is as timely as today's headlines.

Lessons from the great Eddie Garcia

By Ronald Mangubat

IT HAPPENED TWO YEARS AGO, but my first immersion in film production will always be memorable because of the privilege of working with the great Eddie Garcia.

I was the line producer of the Quezonlupo entry, "KU Red # 1." Rico Arevalo is first-time director/editor based on her Palanca award-winning screenplay and an entry in the Cinemalaya film festival.

Pet had already finalized negotiations with most of our cast, but we still didn't have an actor to play the lead character, Lolo Joseph, the stubborn patriarch whose illness opens old wounds in the family. But, the cathartic experience eventually leads to domestic healing.

First time

I remember how my voice cracked the first time I spoke with Mr. Garcia on the phone.

The man has a strong presence, and I've only seen him in his action performances. Face to face, he can easily draw attention even without saying a word. The epithet alfa? I saw on our first shooting day.

If there was one thing he taught us, it was the value of professionalism. Through Garcia's actions, he clearly imparted this message: Love your job, work hard, and take it seriously.

At our preproduction meeting, he declared our cast line reading for the cast — from the first to the last. And it wasn't just the dialogue the cast read — it included even the sequence numbers, scene description and the screenwriter's instructions!

Details

Days before the film shooting day, he unceremonially called me (even in the middle of the night) to ask about production details...costumes, props, questions about scene orientations.

GARCIA. Perfectionist.

Antolina Villa, our production designer whom he requested to visit his home to take a look at his clothes, was so amazed at how organized Garcia was. She said all of his shirts, trousers, shoes and hats were already arranged...with some spending blocks!

A day prior to our first shooting day, Garcia didn't settle for the usual address of the location shoot. He requested me to for a road sketch, complete with landmarks so that he wouldn't get lost. Intrigued by his earlier shock, he would notice small details and make suggestions.

But, his suggestions were made nicely. In fact, the guy never complained! He ate his meals in a styrofoam box just like everyone else. He would even crack jokes when the cast and crew were feeling droopy.

Glimpse

I got a glimpse of the real Eddie Garcia when, during a 20-minute break, as I was busy computing, our production expenses, he approached me, pointed to the big stack I'd been working on, and asked: "Mag-kit here beside you?"

That was the day 1993 died, and that moment our long existence. I asked him what exactly happened in that party where FPJ suffered a massive stroke, and Garcia narrated everything in detail.

Then, our conversation shifted to the FPJ movies he had appeared in, and I remember Garcia mumbling his lines from some of those movies.

He told me how he likes working with young people...especially those who are into digital films, because not only do they offer fresh ideas, they are also very driven.

Last shooting day

On our last shooting day, just before we packed up, I interviewed the cast (including Irma Adlawan, Angelu de Leon and Soliman Cruz-Jamisola) and asked them how it felt to work with Tito Eddie.

As Adlawan was expressing how thrilled she was performing with the great actor, I saw from the corners of my eye how Garcia slowly walked away from the set. He was wanting to hear the compliments heaped on him. Such humility moved all of us.

Thank you for the experience and the inspiration, Tito Eddie! It was an honor to have worked with you.

Garcia Eddie Garcia's award-winning performance in "KU Red # 1" from Jan. 21 to Feb. 4 at the Robinson's Galleria. Indefinite. The film also won for Awards the best director trophy of the Best Cinemalaya Film Festival.

It's all in the family

By Bebe Cervantes

LEN CLAMEY WAS AN ICON OF Australian culture. Others called "The Man with a Thousand Faces," he starred in memorable films where his expertise with cinematic make-up transformed him from the "Phantom of the Opera" to Quasimodo in "The Hunchback of Notre Dame."

The son of deaf-mute parents, Clamey's talent in mime and screen make-up earned him a niche among the greatest stars of the silent film era.

Charismatic

For his part, John Barrymore was known as The Great Profile. He, his brother Lionel and sister Ethel made a handsome trio. John was a charismatic actor, but he was also a lovable who wasted his looks, talent and money in Hollywood. After he passed away, his equally talented daughter, Diana, made an impressive film debut, becoming a rock to the bottle.

It seemed that the three powers were cursed by a family flaw — until Adia Astley's daughter, Drew, debuted successfully in Steven Spielberg's "E.T." A delightfully cute moppet set with Shirley Temple's charm, she was an inconsistent presence on the big screen. However, by the time she was in her teens, she had also graduated to alcohol, sex and drugs — the same vices that had ruined the careers of her grandfather, father and aunt!

Fortunately, Drew got her act together and came back in a big way. Not only did the teenage starlet sympathize with her, but producers and directors also cast her in heartfelt humanas. The once-troubled teenager is ably poised in her life and career that she soon started producing her own films. She has become one of Hollywood's most bankable stars, and looks the last that seemed to have bounded her talented family.

Like Drew's luminous presence and blond, good looks contrasted with the dark character played by Dustin Hoffman in "Midnight Cowboy" in the '60s, Wright was cast in good films like "Catch 22" and acted alongside screen luminaries like Robert Redford.

In the '80s, he had become a fixture in prestigious films that cast him in notable character roles.

Problematic

Enter his seemingly problem-ridden but drop-dead gorgeous daughter named Angelina Jolie, who followed Wright's footsteps.

Dubbed Tinseltown's Bad Girl, she immediately became labeled trouble. Worse, her then-husband, actor Billy Bob Thorton, also had a bad-boy image. But, like Drew, she has defied her career as well that even

BARRYMORE. His/her famous family's gifts — and flaws.

her controversial marriage to Billy Bob Thornton and their subsequent divorce only added to her charisma. She later garnered a first supporting actress Oscar.

Jolie's monstrous personal life apparently improved her box-office magic.

The artistic genes may have helped, but Jane, Drew and Angelina succeeded on their own merits. They continue to add prestige to their forebears' legendary names.

Pinoy indies find a home

By Rita Arevalo

DESPITE, THE HOME OF LOcal cinematic films, had a "monumental" launching last Jan. 15, complete with sumptuous buffet, on a by "Strong" choice number by the Philippine Band. See performance from Up Dharma Down at Bohemian's Gallery.

The project, hosted by Angel Aquino and Tuesan Bulilla, was planned like a traditional, show-biz awards night — the extravagance among the indie boys indeed perfect. All night, actors, directors and film workers were in a carnival, "pinch me" mood, because their dream of having a permanent home had finally come true.

So excited

Even Bulilla got excited hosting the event. He made us laugh when he mistakenly used the word "multimedia" instead of "multibalasyon" to describe our filmmakers. Good thing Angel corrected him.

The highlight of the event was the distribution of the Pinoy Indiyan Awards by the Philippine Independent Filmmakers' Multi-Purpose Cooperative (PIC) to Tikoy Aguiluz, Ed Camiguin, Mark Meonsang, Mauro O'Hara, Rox Lee, Milo de Leon, Virgie Moreno, Ben Pinga, Raymund Red, Noel Pejoro and Jaclyn Tablizo. Actors Angel and Jaclyn presented them with trophies designed by Ilka Lluch Dalena.

Movies moved at when the crowd her award with cut discussed National Artists. She said: "I would like to step aside to let the shadows of the greats be made known. I remember those who are not here: Bernal, Aguilan, Brocka. They all belong here."

Change

Red recalled that, 20 years ago, organizers of the debates "threw the Festival out of the window to be young, independent filmmakers. Now, he says, events have come full circle: "We are seeing change. We have not retired. We are pitching up once again."

Call 433-7223, or e-mail Moya Dalena at ... for more info.

Focus on 'freaks' deplored

By Nestor U. Torre

THROUGH THE YEARS, "American Idol" has "unanointed" winners, not just with respectable singing, but with its complete opposite—the worst musical was taken murdering songs with outrageous gumption.

Most of the non-talents were good only for the moment's snorting laugh, but William Hung parlayed his total lack of musical talent into a show biz career.

Laughing stock

While most viewers thought the "freaks" on "American Idol" were frankly funny, however, I found them quite painful. I didn't like the way the show was subliminally encouraging them to do their worst, so they would become the laughing stock of the viewing public.

Pia: I acting like an excitedly scrupulous and passed, was pretty poopy? Not yours, it sucked that way—but that one, other voices have finally been raised against the idiots in ordinary theaters on "freaks" for "entertainment's" sake.

Some days ago, on "The View," co-host Rosie O'Donnell erred in on "American Idol" from after Oprah Winfrey asked Simon Cowell why obvious musicians were given so much audience exposure on the show.

Other observers rued the fact this exposure particularly exposed seeing losers' singers making such fools of themselves during auditions.

An NBC executive quickly corrected that contestants weren't being encouraged on for bad, and the show in fact had a mechanism that eliminated contestants who were coming up with artistically bad performances just so they could get more exposure on TV.

Whatever the follow-up execution, it's good that the issue is finally being ventilated in the media, so the worsening situation can be rationalized and rectified.

Human nature

It's true that features in contestants say something about human nature, misplaced ambitions and lack of shame, etc. But, those potentially instructive points are overwhelmed by the cheap laughs and a similarly misplaced feeling of smug superiority engendered in viewers.

Has the criticism against "American Idol's" rough treatment of no-talent auditionees had a positive effect on how the show is run? It's being lauded for it looks like it. Simon Cowell looked chastened when Oprah Winfrey raised leafly questions about the insults hurled at some prospective contestants this year.

Scathing remarks

More to the point, when we tuned in to the awards on Fox World last Wednesday the segment remained the jurors mainly were no less offensive than their scathing remarks the week before.

It looks like even the arch, coldly and catty likes of Cowell and company know values to how to the thing transmit noise of losers and no public opinion.

It's true that an NBC executive has prevented in defending the show's brashness and focus on freaky no-talents, claiming that the show is viewed and enjoyed primarily for those "valuable" elements. But he, too, may eventually change his tune if the ish ish ratpunit continues to gain strength.

Auspicious start for IndieSine

By Rito P. Asilo

THERE'S GOOD REASON FOR the local film artists' controversy round these days. Last week, the Philippine Independent Filmmakers' Multi-Purpose Cooperative (IFC) and Robinsons's Galleria formally launched IndieSine, the popular mall's theater venue that caters to the country's burgeoning indie film market.

This new development augurs well for the industry's new breed of lenser, bold and passionate filmmakers, as well as for movie aficionados who crave for an alternative to mainstream's formulaic offerings. Finally, the Pinoy indie has a home to call its own!

Potboilers

So, if you refuse to be dumbed down by the usual commercial horror potboilers that have been filling the screens of late, go to IndieSine and patronize the films that our new filmmakers have been working up outside mainstream's facile manacles (no food pun).

We had to rearrange our schedule for a chance to finally watch Day del Mundo's "Pepot Artista," which won the best picture prize at the first Cinemalaya festival two years ago, and we were glad we did.

Despite an occasionally languorous pace, del Mundo's first feature is a heartwarming tale about a boy who escapes his seemingly mundane, poverty-ridden life by daydreaming about becoming an actor. The bittersweet finale is a treat that inspires as much as it touches.

CASTILLO. His performance in "Pepot Artista's" lens awaits.

Del Mundo's story is further boosted by its production: for those his nostalgic (the Gay and Up movie-houses, particularly) and by the subsequent performances of his pajaron film first best actor winner, Elijah Castillo.

Question

Upon Paulo Villaluna's ("Huwag ako") insistence, we also caught Joe and Carol Bell's novel collaborative idea, "Emilio Manyon," a series of 28 shorts that does not answer the question, "What happened after 1986?," but using the enjoying directorial styles of 20 filmmakers.

While not all of its portions work, its allegorical senses nevertheless chip with the irony of the political mirth and moral decay that followed the bloodless revolution.

Villaluna's short collection that is, to a cohesive form that delivers a cinematic metaphor depicting the struggles of local indie cinema. In "Emilio Manyon," the sum is greater than its parts.

Our top picks: Raymond Red's "Matatabang Kanser Obdulio," Neil Dava's "Bayabang Kiba," Villaluna's "Una Huo," Rito de Guzmán's "Tinidor," Jiminio dela Cruz's "Smuggling Kiba," El Sandoval's "Dilubio," Ted Boado Jr.'s "Local Hoth," and Lav Diaz's "Nang Matapos ang Ulan."

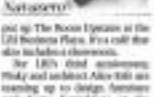
Festival

Following the current Ayala film festival, don't fail to watch Eddie Garcia's award-winning turn in Rica Arevalo's "KD Bed #7," which starts its week-long run on Jan. 30.

Among the treats we receive to be shown until Jan. 28, don't miss Chris Millado's "Tahan sa Hirap," at 4 p.m.; Jeffrey Jeturian's "Rakenrol" at 6:30 p.m., and Ron Steuart's "Rotonda" at 9 p.m.

On Jan. 28, Ellen Ongkeko-Marfil's "Bipo Parang Gabi" at 1:30 p.m. and "Pepot Artista" at 6:30 p.m. On Jan. 29, Dennis Marasigan's "Sa North Diversion Road" at 1:30 p.m. and Brillante Mendoza's "Manoro" at 9 p.m. On Jan. 30, Eamon dela Cruz's "Sunog Baraggi" at 1:30 p.m. and Mendoza's "Masahe" at 6 p.m.

Elegant, homey designs



STREET SMART

Mandy Navasero

NOTED INTERIOR DESIGNER Pinky Cruz-Peralta wants to make homeowners know that there's a solution to the strange problems in their residential units. She is also into light design.

Pinky's works display the interplay of form, texture and composition. She believes that a homeowner should have access to a good quality of life regardless of the availability of space.

Model unit

When Stanley Prieto saw her design for a model unit in its upscale, chic residential project, he created an elegant but homey apartment for Stanley's daughter Bianca.

Recently, Pinky and hubby Ari pot up The Room Upstairs at the 2/F Business Plaza. It's cute that also includes showroom.

For LRS third anniversary, Pinky and architect Alice Tolit are teaming up to design furniture and home furnishings at the ground floor of GH, 2139 D. Garcia (formerly Bonifacio), Bel-Air II, Makati City.

* * *

Meanwhile, the Bankaneers community is informed that Dennis de Villa, 39, was cremated last Jan. 25. Her ashes will be brought home to Naga. She is best remembered for her multi-talented, elegant demeanor. For those who wish to contribute to her scholarship program, please make a deposit under Evelyn Ignon and the Bankaneers Savings Lodge and Assoc. Inquiring today, you can view my photos exhibit, "My Bankaneers," a collection of 20 amazing photos community is informed that Dennis de Villa, 39, was cremated last Jan. 25. Her ashes will be brought home to Naga. She is best remembered for her multi-talented, elegant demeanor. For those who wish to contribute to her scholarship program, please make a deposit under Evelyn Ignon and the Bankaneers Savings Lodge and Assoc. Inquiring today, you can view my photos exhibit, "My Bankaneers," a collection of 20 amazing photos

PERALTA AND RIFE. Good luminaries.

Logo photo, at the 2nd floor of the LRS Business Plaza.

E-mail: mandynavasero@yahoo.com.ph, or call 899-1767.

FORUM

Movies viewers want to see

By Nestor Torre

WE ASKED VIEWERS TO SHARE their thoughts on what movies they want to see this year.

"Sana, mas maraming regional films ang pagtuunan ng pansin ng Gloria ng Tanggawi sa Lahat ni Cesar Montano, talagang pina-mahigpan ng pelikula ang gagaing Bisaya tayo. Sana, ang gagaing pinoy-ila. Tagalog isn't the only language in the country and Manila's culture isn't the only one we have. Gusto kong makakita ng iba't-ibang tao at kultura."—Catherine Lim, 20, graduate student

MONTANO. Proud of his roots.

Trend

"I want to see fantasy because it's the trend nowadays. But, I'd also like to see the use of modern gadgets and technology that will make movies more interesting to watch."—Shadrene Orbiana, 23, elementary school teacher

"Gusto ko horror drama, but something realistic. I also want to see Filmdomestic type of movies, comedies, and love stories with not-so-happy endings."—Nina Bonacera, 30, business owner

"I want to see socially relevant films with stories that promote the good values of the Filipino family."—Jun John Mesarez, 34, teacher/film producer

"Gusto kong komidi ang mas-sabi ninyo drama—mga makikita mo sa totoo lang. Mga pelikulang ginawa dati nina Nida Aquino at Tirso Sienes like 'The Moment Maxwell' and 'Dahlan Gerilla.' Isang mga mga kalitong sitwasi gaya ng 'Lord, have mercy!' at 'Haway, help me!'"—Michael Salinas, 24, engineer

Heroes

"I want to see historical movies depicting the lives of local heroes. These films could foster in our readers, viewers, courage and other traits that embody the Filipino spirit. At this point, when we all seem so divided, this type of film will be a breath of fresh air. They will also be a unifying factor for all of us."—Oscar Yalong, 29, team manager

"I'd like to see stories that depict the realities of life."—Edwin Bernido, 30, accountant

"I want to see films that are not formulaic, are unconditional, and have interesting plots. Kung ipapag pawalang pag-asawa pagkatapos mapatay, 'yung mamatayan kung sinu-sino pero at reaction paper. The usual films are boring and very commercial. Those days, kung gusto mong mag-aksiyon' ay magsisine ang (bida ng) manood ka ng sa Gen."—Stephen Matsuljan, 22, college student

Drama

"Films that would inspire people to keep reaching for their dreams. I'd like to see more animated movies. I want to watch movies that make sense, not merely because the producers' only intention is to make money."—Jessica Tiburcio Ojina, 29, goldsmyr counselor

"I want movies that show good moral values. They should display the good traits of our culture. These days, a lot of women are depicted in a very vulgar manner. Sure, the women could be artistic, but we should also see to it that we don't forget to showcase the best of what we have."—Edna Agbis, 38, high school teacher

glorietta GREENBELT ayala center GLOR ayala malls

AT THE CINEMAS

G1	1 BABEL	2 NIGHT AT THE MUSEUM	3 BABEL	4 AGENT 444				
G4	1 BABEL	2 DEJA VU	3 NIGHT AT THE MUSEUM					
	4 INNOCENT VOICES	5 STRANGER THAN FICTION	6 NIGHT AT THE MUSEUM	7 LITTLE CHILDREN				
GB1	1 BABEL	2 NIGHT AT THE MUSEUM						
GB3	1 BABEL	2 NIGHT AT THE MUSEUM						
	3 STRANGER THAN FICTION	4 LITTLE CHILDREN	5 NIGHT AT THE MUSEUM					
ATC	1 NIGHT AT THE MUSEUM	2 BABEL						
	3 LITTLE CHILDREN	4 AGENT 444	5 DEJA VU					
ACC	1 NIGHT AT THE MUSEUM	2 SCHOOL FOR SCOUNDRELS	3 BABEL	4 AGENT 444				
M2	1 NIGHT AT THE MUSEUM	2 LITTLE CHILDREN						
	3 DEJA VU	4 AGENT 444	5 BABEL					

At the Activity Center

GLORIETTA

TOWN

ATC

MARKET! MARKET!

NOW SHOWING exclusively at GLORIETTA 4 & GREENBELT 3 CINEMAS

"Two thumbs way up."

★★★★

"This is one of the year's best films!"

"... MAGIC..."

★★★★

"BRILLIANT!"

Will Ferrell's Stranger than Fiction

MAKE SPACE FOR THE AYALA MALLS GRAND '07 SALE

Start off '07 with up to 70% off!

WINSLET. Brilliant.

Disturbing images in 'Children'

By Nestoal Rara

NOT ALL THE CHILdren in "Little Children" are small. In this compelling set-in-suburbia drama, pieces of toddlers reveal themselves as far less much older than their offspring. Underneath their adult facades, they turn out to be equally as untrained, undisciplined, and unsupervised—and in need of growth.

Directed by Todd Field, the movie fixes its lens on the upper middle-class melodrama lifestyle of young, ambitious families.

Idyllic

It begins with a scene showing the return of a convicted sex offender to a seemingly idyllic neighborhood.

Parents with kids have on it are put up everywhere as people react with outrage at the presence of this declared pervert near their children.

However, Ronnie (Jackie Earle Haley), who got sentenced for exposing himself to a minor, isn't the only outsider in this tight little community.

There's also Sarah (Kate Winslet), a classified young mother who's married to an insecure, porn-loving man who's studying for the bar. She finds herself in love to obtain the party-type sex and secret smiles of the other suburban housewives, but at the same time, she realizes that she's not going to be living as competent to the mothering department as they are.

Then, there's Brad (Patrick Wilson), a handsome stay-at-home husband who sends the other mothers in a tizzy when he strolls with his son to the playground. Married to a documentary filmmaker (Jennifer Connelly) and supposedly studying for the bar (which he has already flunked twice), Brad feels directionless and unmanned.

When Brad and Sarah meet at the playground for the first time, you just know that it won't be long before they embark on an affair.

Anxiety

Winslet is brilliant as the frustrated Sarah, who feels trapped in a life she had not imagined herself living. She communicates her character's anxiety very well.

The rest as gorgeous Pilates, on the other hand, is harder to pin down. He seems bland, but then, his character really seems to be that way, so he's good as well. It's hard to tell if he's doing any acting or not.

In any case, he doesn't match Winslet's intensity, nor Haley's, whose creepy, dim-witted character is the most memorable of the bunch. Ronnie is someone you fear and loath, but who ultimately gains your sympathy.

The movie, despite a rambling pace and some dragging moments, resonates with disturbing images that are not only consistent your attention, but also make you think.

movietime SHOWTIME
Your life as a movie
SM CINEMA

ROBINSONS MOVIEWORLD CINEMAS MOVIE GUIDE

CINEMA ACCESS
635-5555
FOR ALL BRANCHES

www.robinsonsmovieworld.com

MOVIES/SCHEDULES/PRICES ARE SUBJECT TO CHANGE WITHOUT PRIOR NOTICE

GALLERIA

1 DEJA VU – THX
2 NIGHT AT THE MUSEUM
3 Indieflow's Digital Cinema Staging Ayala Film Festival
4 BABEL
5 LITTLE CHILDREN
6 ERAGON
7 KASAL, KASALI, KASALO
8 SAW 3
BLOOD DIAMOND
9 ROBIN HOOD
10 AGENT X44

ERMITA

1 NIGHT AT THE MUSEUM
2 ROBIN HOOD
SAW 3
3 BABEL
4 DEJA VU
5 LITTLE CHILDREN
6 AGENT X44
7 BLOOD DIAMOND
ERAGON
8 KASAL, KASALI, KASALO

METRO EAST

1 ROBIN HOOD
2 NIGHT AT THE MUSEUM
3 AGENT X44
4 DEJA VU
5 SAW 3
6 LITTLE CHILDREN
7 ERAGON
8 KASAL, KASALI, KASALO

NOVALICHES

1 DEJA VU
2 NIGHT AT THE MUSEUM
3 AGENT X44
4 SAW 3

PIONEER

1 NIGHT AT THE MUSEUM
2 BABEL
3 AGENT X44
4 LITTLE CHILDREN

SHOWING TODAY!

BAGONG AGOS FILM FESTIVAL
EXTENDED to January 30!

Visit us at indieSine, Robinsons Galleria!

STA. ROSA

1 NIGHT AT THE MUSEUM
2 SPIRIT TRAP
3 SAW 3
4 KAMASUTRA 3
5 AGENT X44

LIPA

1 ZU WARRIORS
2 AGENT X44
3 A GOOD YEAR
4 SPIRIT TRAP
5 SAW 3

DASMARINAS

1 AGENT X44
2 KAMASUTRA 3
3 SAW 3
4 NIGHT AT THE MUSEUM

ANGELES

1 NIGHT AT THE MUSEUM
2 AGENT X44
3 KAMASUTRA 3
4 A GOOD YEAR

IMUS

1 DEJA VU
2 SAW 3
3 NIGHT AT THE MUSEUM
4 AGENT X44

STARMILLS

1 NIGHT AT THE MUSEUM
2 KAMASUTRA 3
3 AGENT X44
4 KASAL, KASALI, KASALO
5 SAW 3
6 A GOOD YEAR

BACOLOD

1 NIGHT AT THE MUSEUM
2 SHAOLIN VS. EVIL DEAD 2
3 AGENT X44
4 DEJA VU
5 BORAT
6 SAW 3

ILOILO

1 NIGHT AT THE MUSEUM
2 AGENT X44
3 SHAOLIN VS. EVIL DEAD 2
4 DEJA VU
5 BORAT
6 SAW 3

Tours, Leisure & Chow

Where to Stop Where to GO

A weekly directory of the country's best establishments

Dusit's Benkay- offering new Japanese feasts

FOOD LOVERS HAVE ANOTHER reason to visit Benkay with the its new "Japanese for Journal" offered for lunch and dinner. The new set menu runs every day of the week. This is actually an advantage for diners since they are afforded with more Japanese cuisine to choose from depending on their liking or the recommendation of Benkay's resident chef. Benkay's new "Japanese for Ideas" offerings consist of an appetizer, soup, salad, choice of main course, rice or noodle dish and dessert all for the budget friendly price of only P500 nett per person.

Throughout the years, Benkay has been celebrated for its well-loved and authentic Japanese cuisine and has created a loyal following both locally and internationally. Benkay's inspiration for diners have reflected in its devotion to serve its patrons with the finest cuisine of Japan. Chef Yoshiaki Imamura, who successfully regained Benkay's sweet-to-sour offerings, assured that this legacy is delivered. "Each item we offer are prepared with every effort to delight our patrons every day. Day old Benkay" exclaimed Chef Imamura. "It is my mission to 'preserve the essence of Japanese cuisine' for our guest's satisfaction" he added.

Benkay is located at the lobby level and is open daily for lunch, from 11.30 a.m. to 2.30 p.m. and for dinner, from 6 p.m. to 10 p.m. For inquiries, call the restaurant manager at 887-3333 extension 2042. Advance dining reservation is advised.

G Hotel Manila by Waterfront backed by Filipino excellence

RECENTLY, G HOTEL MANILA BY Waterfront opened its doors to the public to allow them to experience another Waterfront excellence in the heart of Manila. Two months prior to its opening, G Hotel was the recipient of a huge following in developed countries. Boutique hotels differentiate themselves from other conventional hotels based on the smallness of the property, but for G Hotel Manila, a third differing factor, the G Hotel Manila is a de 24-hour gourmet and buffet hotel.

G is the great balance of style and substance that the property showcases in its suite (Deluxe and suites) and public areas. Upon entering the suite, I noticed G during in (dancing) Jan. 17, 2006. G's lobby was adorned in black and white from the above to cold floor, the hotel's coffee shop, to the lobby lobby then to service the elevators.

As the guests stepped out at the seventh floor where the main entrance also occupies, they were welcomed by a chunk of gold in the form of marble, the hotel's full name, with a grand view of the night sky overlooking the Manila Bay.

Salim Ganchalian, president of Waterfront Philippines Inc. introduced the new hotel concept to the crowd of Manila.

When asked how it was possible for a new five-star hotel concept to be opened on excellent a preparation, but Ganapathipillai, hotel manager of G, replied, "It was never that hard for us since G has been backed by the concept team of Waterfront Hotels and Casinos, which basically completed of all the response still. Only 45 of them are Filipino-concept for the group executive Chef."

The buffet training steward lead in fact, but with the help of proper resources and development dishes headed by Gaye Maureen Gonzales, director of PROS, and Agnes Lozano, group training manager of the Club Ambassador concept and senior ambassadors of Waterfront was considered to G.

"It was just like as if we were receiving another Waterfront Hotel, but this time only combining of 70 rooms," Ganapathipillai explained."

For inquiries and reservations, call 525-9000, 845-0888 or e-mail gmanila@waterfronthotels.net, gfm-sal@waterfronthotels.net.

New residents manager for Somerset Salcedo

SOMERSET SOPHISTICATED RESIDENCES MEET GENeral manager Arthur Dizon announces the appointment of Jamal Ramos as the new residence manager of Somerset Salcedo Makati. Ramos graduated with a history and political science degree from De La Salle University. Besides his

joined the hospitality industry back in 1999. Calling professional experience in guest services operations from various five star international hotels. He is also being recognized as an alum of the prestigious "Les Clefs D'or Philippines", an international organization of hotel concierges in the world. In 2006, Ramos joined Somerset as the assistant residence manager of Somerset Millennium Makati prior to his promotion as the new residence manager of Somerset Salcedo. Additional to the position, he assists open new doors by continually enhancing the product and service level of the company. Currently he delivers top service from the front and going the extra mile to each guest at Somerset Salcedo Makati. For reservations, visit any Somerset Service Residence Philippines, call Cookie Ong-Diaz or Vanessa Cabrales at 888-8333, e-mail sslalesmail@the-small.com or vanessa.cabrales@the-apartments.com, or visit www.the-small.com

Superb Holiday at Quantum Resorts in Subic

FROM THE RENOWNED PROPERTY management team of Quantum Hotels & Resorts comes another gem in leisure and recreation resorts. Its energetically located at the future of the Subic Bay Freeport Zone is the Quantum Subic Holiday Villas is a five-minute drive to the industrial zone, and is 15 minutes away from the beaches of Subic, as well as its entertainment attractions and recreation destinations.

Subic Holiday Villas offers a wide variety of fully furnished condominium — from studio units to one bedroom and two-bedroom suites. The suites come in exclusive designs, while the kitchens are ready with refrigerators, stoves, microwaves toaster ovens, glassware, cutlery and cookery. Each unit is equipped with cable network televisions, individually controlled air-conditioning units and hot and cold waters in the en suite toilet and bathrooms.

Guests at the Subic Holiday Villas can enjoy facilities for rest and relaxation such as the tropical swimming pool and soaking pool in the fountain area, a tennis court, and walking and jogging path. In a convenience site, Subic Holiday Villas provide conference areas, along with cookers and outdoor function rooms.

Other Quantum Hotels & Resorts properties strategically located in the Clarkfield Business District of Makati include SEA Towers, RSA Suites, and the Petit-Mandarin. For more information and bookings, call Quantum Hotels & Resorts at 864-0690 to e-mail info@quantumhotelsandresorts.com or www.quantumhotelsandresorts.com.

People, Events & Products

Start the year right with Hopia Mongo Lite

MOST OF US WELCOME THE NEW Year with long lists of New Year's resolutions. Topping them, quick is the resolution to shed off those unwanted belly and pounds and eventually start living a healthier lifestyle.

Most often than not, shifting to a healthy lifestyle doesn't entail hard and dour. Many are encouraged during the start of the year but the passion eventually fades after some time. Exercise and dieting don't have to kill you, anymore. You don't have to be a gym maniac to master those bulging and develop the six-pack. A 30-minute walk in the park plant will do. Dieting doesn't necessarily mean starving yourself. Enjoying some of scrumptious food, if it just a matter of discipline of food and healthy substitutes.

After the Christmas season, the all-time favorite hopia is one of those gifts we undeniably can't resist. Unlike those hopia-type munchies from the usual old Chinese delicacy shop, the Filipino loves. Every Christmas, the Filipino-owned manufacturer of this wholesome product not only for diabetic patients but for those who want to monitor the consumed food for their own sake.

Be sure of the really kinds to experiment the coming days of Hopia Mongo Lite. This Special hopia has a low-glycemic index, lower in sugar content is low and is suitable for diabetics and figure-conscious hopia lovers. With the carefully crafted combination of the Hopia Lite, anyone can savor the classic taste of Filipino's all-time favorite treat, filled with smooth mung bean and coconut meats.

Another exciting and guilt-free innovation from Chua is here these products are ranked. "Traditionally, hopia is cooked using fatty oils. When I took over Eng Bee Tee, I decided to use a healthier alternative, corn oil. These small changes make a big difference for the health of our customers," Chua reveals.

"Eng Bee Tee's concern is more than the satisfaction of our customers, we value their health. Choose the Eng Bee Tee Hopia Mongo Lite! You can still enjoy your favorite hopia, without missing the calories!" she advises.

Eng Bee Tee is one of the country's most celebrated hopia makers manufactured with goodness and freshness, nearly sixty years inside her life. Eng Bee Tee products are totally available in various supermarkets, groceries, restaurants, eateries and school canteens. The company is also one of the biggest international exporters of hopia, delivering as fans, the Middle East, Europe and the United States.

The muffin has come a long way

SPECIALTY BREADS AND PASTRIES CONTINUE TO be the breakfast fare of choices. The wide range of choices now available in the market has also opened a whole new world of taste and inspired the food palate to breakfast traditions from the West. Sweet and savoury muffins have also made the Pinoy more adventurous and more receptive to his eating habits. The continental breakfast with specialty breads, jam and fruit is now familiar. So is English tea time with its tiny cakes and pastries. Inspired by the popularity of the Filipino love to throw dining traditions to the table. In the Philippines, the first muffin store was set up in downtown Chicago, just like the English, American was instantly took to the muffin. In the Philippines, muffins are regular fare in specialty bakeshops in malls, hotels coffee shops, restaurants, and doughnut chains. Placed alongside other specialty breads and pastries, they are often generally and relatively inexpensive. This is why Sarah Bread, known for producing high-quality and delicious breads, pastries and cakes, is also forward with its collection of its muffins. Gardenia Muffins are made in the Amerikan tradition. For a tasty and tangy taste, there's the blueberry muffin, the corn muffin with its natural sweet flavor to be eaten with butter, and for the chocoholic, there's the ultimate favorite chocolate muffin. All bursting with mouth-watering flavors that are sure to appeal to the Filipino's sweet tooth! Gardenia Muffins come in packs of four and since it comes in packs of three, it's one filling meal or even snack with a thermos, both for breakfast or snacks, or as a filling dessert after sumptuous meal.

SATURDAY Special

great time to go to the movies

By Nestor U. Torre

THIS WEEK'S EXCELLENT TIME UP TO THE opportunity to view some outstanding movies in the rental couple of months: "Charlotte's Web" stars the precocious Dakota Fanning and the current by much-missed Julia Roberts in an inspired retelling of the much-loved children's tale.

The twenty-plus features a hearty menagerie of talking farm animals, plus captivating vocal performances from the unsurprised likes of Robert Redford and Oprah Winfrey.

"Babel" has just won the best picture award at the Golden Globes, and been nominated in the same category in the 2006 Oscars, so it's a must-see. Which is not to say that it's going to be an easy view, since the movie works at different levels and pulls in contrasting events and points of view. The fact that its cast includes Brad Pitt and Cate Blanchett helps, however.

Dark drama

Tahir Rahil's "Little Children" exploits new Oscar nominee Kate Winslet, and combines dark drama and humor.

In "Stranger Than Fiction," Will Ferrell's character discovers that his life is being written by a novelist played by Emma Thompson. —(Hey, whose life is it, anyway?

"Blood Diamond" is still showing, and its concern was been enhanced by just-in Oscar score that its two main actors, Leonardo DiCaprio and Djimon Hounsou, have been nominated as best actor and best supporting actor, respectively.

"The History Boys" opens on Feb. 7 and runs exclusively at Greenbelt 3 and Glorietta 4. The film, which is based on an acclaimed stage play, takes place in a grammar school in Englland during the '80s.

It's about a group of bratty young men preparing for their entrance examinations to Oxford and Cambridge with the help of three very different schoolteachers.

Awards

The play won a number of Olivier awards during its London run before copping a record six Tony awards after moving on to Broadway. The film is directed by its stage director, Nicholas Hytner, and backed by its original theater cast.

Mel Gibson's "Apocalypto" brings darkly and violently to life Mel Gibson's assumed view of the Mayan past, during the Mayan empire's zenith and apotheosis.

In radical contrast, "Music and Lyrics" is much lighter and lighter, but it's also able in its own right because it tells the charming story of two thoroughly mismatched people (played by Hugh Grant and Drew Barrymore) who fall in love on strings of song. Grant's on-cue, get-portrayal of a washed-up '80s pop star is worth the price of admission.

FEMALE. A file told in fiction.

FANNING. capable film version of the popular children's tale, "Charlotte's Web."

Discover the secrets of
ASIAN COOKING
Catch the country's top chefs as they dish out popular and well-loved recipes from Thailand, China, Singapore, and Korea every weekend starting February 3, 2007 from 4 to 6 pm at select Shopwise and Rustan's Supermarket branches.

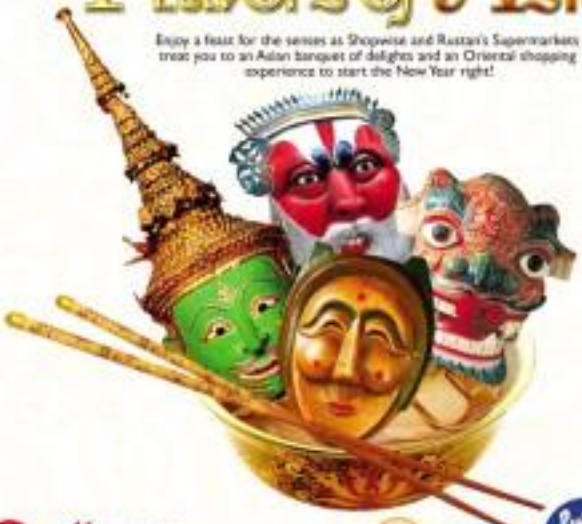
Save on
ASIAN ADVENTURE
Get the chance to be one of eight (8) winners of all-expense paid trips for two to Asia's top dining and shopping destinations: **Bangkok, Shanghai, Singapore,** and **Seoul, Korea!**

Have a taste of
ASIAN BEER DELIGHTS
Sample the best imported signature beers of Asia every weekend starting February 3, 2007 from 1 to 9 pm at select Shopwise and Rustan's Supermarket branches. Items are also available throughout the promo period.

Visit our amazing customers and
EXPLORE ASIA
through an exclusive selection of books on Asian culture, cuisine and travel at select Shopwise and Rustan's Supermarket branches.

Flavors of Asia

Enjoy a feast for the senses as Shopwise and Rustan's Supermarkets treat you to an Asian banquet of delights and an Oriental shopping experience to start the New Year right!



Philippine Airlines

SHOPWISE
The good life you can afford.

Rustan's

JANUARY 19 TO FEBRUARY 28, 2007

The immortality of Wolfgang

By Marites D. Salazar
Photos by Jim Guiao

"It's as if they never left."

This quick observation from a fan best articulates the overwhelming reception to one of the country's most influential bands during the two-night sold-out concerts at Sta Mesa Mueseum.

Wolfgang "limited" with their signature songs and more—stopping life once again to feed fans who have been living to see them play. And they did not disappoint. The music and the years proved to be immortals.

Lead guitarist Marcel Leguia, along with Basshack get-crazy Vico Ripoll, took refuse rags of the two fellow band members' brief visit in Manila during the holidays and separated the event with help from some friends. Wolfgang frontman Basil Arkadi is heard in the concert movie, while bassist Mon Legaspi works in Hong Kong.

"Absolute joy," is how Basil describes the smile on their faces upon seeing that the cult following has remained faithful to their songs.

"It makes me feel good to know that the people are still interested in what we are doing," he said. "It's nice to play to those guys that I haven't played with for so long and that's one of the best feelings."

"It was apparently surprising that we got that reunion because we didn't know where we stood with the fans," Marcel said.

However, are divisions MIA? Guitarist is currently on tour with his own band and was unable to take part in the reunion concert.

Wolfgang, a non-conformist heavy metal-hard rock group band, started to make good impression in 1992. At the turn of the millennium, the music gurus in the country had shifted to R&B, and every jersey became rampant. The band was not spared.

With the US market in mind, they decided to try their luck. But the rules did not turn their way and they found themselves closing their new doing. Confusing reports spread but the band wants to clarify that there has been no bad blood between them and the players just didn't happen.

The biggest blow for the fans who've been holding on to their cores was when Basil announced on June that he will be moved to reuniting with the parents indefinitely. Based on the replies in forums and e-groups, the fans seemed like they were faced with a stench of a loved one.

Welcome surprise

Since 2005, The Wolfgang comeback frenzy "Concert" fever only a hint for the hopes of fans, a somewhat spread speculation that they were testing the waters and were seriously considering a major comeback.

So, are the fans right to keep their hopes up?

"We are back making music and we are very much working on an album," Marcel said.

But Basil was quick to add: "But it is not like we are thinking of being on a tour."

In fact, they are not even looking for a new drummer.

Marcel, who now works as an assistant for the Honduran, came up with several reasons why they have been on doing "breaks from doing commercial/popular I'm not even interested to [tour], and it sounds so good when the frontman sings!!!

Marcel sees another one and the matter of metaphors Last out the lyrics. Basil, for his part, sees the new record, and the guitarist quickly put some on it.

"We know how it is like to a garage together with your friends and write songs without any intention of having anybody hear it," Basil said.

The momentum just kept building up and the next thing the band knew, they had three and a half songs.

"It's been fun [with a lot of work]," Basil said. "The good thing about how we're doing this is we don't have anybody over us pressuring us. We just work on it until we feel like it's time."

Marcel would like to have the album done by the end of the year, "but if it's not ready, it's not ready. It's not going to come out."

Recognizing that writing music over the Internet works, they both agreed to come up with an album.

"I'm [considering we couldn't do] three years ago," Marcel said, "but now that we see that it can be done, we'll do it."

Catching the wave

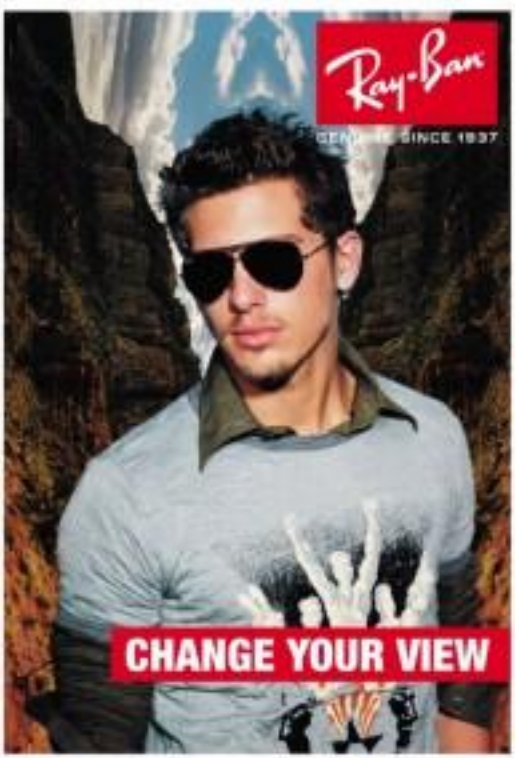
Basil's three days are every where. The rock music scene is enjoying the ride. Every minute of daily schedule, and every concert, one band pops out from nowhere.

The new generation band said the "real thing." Periodic rock bands the chiefly their screaming and music as rock are to be a bunch of fun.

The band's unspoiled band is known for its hard-hitting, loud, grunge sound, sagely lyrics, accented by Basil's rough voice. Still, the Wolfgang stamp will be evident in the album?

"Unchanged! in a natural evolution," Marcel explained. "It's good to see people still enjoy the song as a Wolfgang song. But at the same time, I think there are

WOLFGANG ©



"The good thing about how we're doing this is we don't have anybody over us pressuring us"

meeting the icons

ON HIS RUSH VISIT TO MANILA, MATT Sorum gave a taste of the new music of Wolfgang to adoring fans and supporters. The two-night sold-out concert at the Music Museum renewed great interest in the band's music.

People have been talking of a supposed major comeback, and an album is the works. The latter has truth to it, although there is no definite date as to when fans can enjoy the new music of Wolfgang.

Basil was joined by lead guitarist Marcel Leguia in taking the reigns of several companies to meet and greet adoring fans. Employees of SoHo can't get enough of Basil, who patiently signed autographs and posed for photos with male and female fans.

The soft-spoken Basil felt like he had not been away that long because the familiarity of the people with their music didn't matter anymore.

Imminent praises for their first concert with Basshack are heard from supporters.

The two also met with the representatives of Star-Rap, Yoyol, and Yes Imusic at the Makati office in early January.

Introducing ex Basil and Marcel, they went to be backed by a years company during the early years of their career.

The immortality of Wolfgang

From page E1

some differences with the music now than then before. I'm not sure if I can pinpoint what exactly it is, but definitely it has changed."

The people who managed to attend the two shows got a peek of what's to come with the new song "If Souls Appeal." The result is a burning meeting the blood-thirsty Wolfgang fans.

"I think it's not the same," Bass said. "It's still heavy and fast but it's like where we would have gone if we decided to make an album right after Black Hunters."

While Bass has nothing obscene to declare to your ears, it is only the natural next step. Not a setback. It's a step forward.

"I'd like to believe that we are still a heavy rock band," Manuel said.

But the guys are not about to confirm to what is popular or what is selling.

"What I can really be proud of is that I can look at our catalogue and there's not one album that I will be ashamed of," Bass said. "Every time we put something out, it's something that we were all excited about."

And it's true. Their work speaks for themselves.

Not sharp-enough!

Sure will always have it, once fans name Zbigniewed by the shaken "holy grail," the most positive vocalist was prompted to say he has "forgotten" part that his future ways not long or sharp enough.

"I was talking about the music industry itself," he said. "Playing in front of people is very easy to deal with. It is what's going on behind the scene that kind of frustrates me."

"Just trying to chase that holy grail, that's frustrating. That's constantly dangled in front of you and every time you try to get it somebody just says it further away."

Still, it didn't stop him from making what he does and likes doing best.

Because the reunion concert was just a span of the moment gathering, Bass and Manuel are still careful on what the next step would be.

Families and work are still priorities, they want to go a straight. The words rising is there no give down the drills. Bass is taking up his interest in Advertising in the States, Manuel is assisting the first born, and Hess has been doing well in Hong Kong.

"We are not done yet," Manuel said. "It's not a question of whether we are going to come up with something new again, but rather a question of when."

Everything has been in motion for the band that helped define heavy rock music in the country. Eventually something will come out, hopefully soon.

Drops of Life

REPLENISH WITH EVERY DROP

Proper hydration means getting the right amount of liquids into our bodies. It is an important aspect of our health, as we simply cannot function properly without constantly replenishing lost fluids. In normal conditions, thirst is our guide to know when it's time to hydrate. However, what our bodies can't tell us is what beverage to drink.

REFRESH YOUR BODY WITH EVERY DROP OF COKE

Recent health studies have shown that all beverages hydrate the body, so it is more a matter of quantity than a specific drink. Choose beverages that you enjoy. And what can be more enjoyable than an ice-cold Coca-Cola? Always keep a beverage within your reach. Keep one at your desk, your car, or your bag, for a quick quench. Our bodies absorb all the water it can from whatever we take in, which means that it naturally makes every drop of Coke a valuable contribution to proper hydration.

MAKE EVERY DROP COUNT

Make sure that everything you eat and drink boosts your health because when it comes to hydration, your body makes every drop count. Grab a Coke and raise a toast to a hydrated body. We at The Coca-Cola Company live to provide you with every product that will satisfy your different and changing hydration needs. We understand that you make every drop of your efforts count, and our role is to help you maximize in meeting your desires. We make every drop count, for you.

The Coca-Cola Company

HYDRATION IS NOT ALWAYS SPELLED H-2-O

Keeping the body hydrated is key to good health. People are told eight to twelve glasses of water a day would do the trick. That's a lot of drinking. And sometimes, we do lose count. The good news is, according to health researchers, water is not the only source of hydration. Yes, even beverages like Coca-Cola can hydrate you. Now you can spice up your regulation of fluids by opening a bottle of Coke. It's made up of water with all the nice stuff you enjoy that refreshes both body and soul. That's right, hydration can be spelled as C-O-K-E. Get every drop back. Drink up!

For more information, log on to www.thecoca-colacompany.com.ph

The Coca-Cola Company

Love rules

LOVE'S TRANSFORMATIVE POWER IS THE focal in must-see (screw-see) movies on the cable network Channel: "Love's Long Journey" leads off at 10 p.m. on Feb. 12, with its inspiring story about pastor couple Minnie and Willie, who head west to start a family of three sons. Replays at 7 p.m. on Feb. 16.

"For One Night" (7:30 p.m. on Feb. 15) chronicles a teenager's (Shrina Zeiaoun) scandalous secret to clerly her mom's (engrained party ethics by campaigning for a racially integrated high-school prom.

"Falling in Love with the Girl Next Door" (Feb. 24 at 10 p.m.) is about a wedding that is threatened by decades-long rivalry between the mothers (Mary Duke and Shelley Long) of the bride and groom.

"Two Jane Date" (Feb. 14, 2 a.m.) is about a

MONTAGE

SYNDAL, Nadia in Hallmark drama, "For One Night."

single gal who creates a nonexistent but perfect boyfriend. "Screening Life" (Feb. 15, 2 a.m.) tells a compelling story of a woman's (Virginia Madsen) efforts to rediscover the meaning of life.

In "Coast to Coast," mailed wounds are opened as spouses travel together to attend their son's wedding. And "Straight from the Heart" (Feb. 12, 6 a.m.) involves a mismatched matured woman brought together by a dating service.

Sun Cellular in Davao

Sun Cellular recently visited Davao City to showcase its increased network capacity and expanded reach, which enable its subscribers to enjoy more services and perks. To add to the excitement, Ayo Villegas, Jay-R and Gyo Mikhail and Bernadeus Bernal performed in a mini-concert. Lots of prizes and freebies including free Sun Cellular Prepaid phonelets were given away to lucky subscribers.

Sun Cellular invests $200 million yearly for network expansion and upgrade, putting up additional cell sites in locations outside major urban centers offering services like the 24/7 Call and Text Unlimited, 24/7 Text Unlimited with Voice Calls, 168 Calls, Sup 10 IDD and Text-Messenger. Call 395-8000, or visit www.sunCellular.com.ph.

Nickelodeon marks Year of the Pig

Premiering on Twitch on Feb. 3, eight-year "Twins & Josh," in "Mr. Misty"—welcome to fast-food hell! Joshua and Parker are in charge here, and what they lack in customer service, they more than make up for in imagination!

Say "Hello, Giggle!" on Feb. 14 (all times 7am hours of love-centered episodes of four shows like "My Life as a Robot" at 5:30 p.m., "Hey Arnold!" at 6 p.m., "As Told by Ginger" at 6:30 p.m., and "The Fairly Odd Parents" at 7 p.m.

Finally, greet the Chinese New Year on Feb. 18 with "Nick Spider Special" at noon, "Hey Arnold!" at 1 p.m., and "The Angry Beavers" at 2 p.m. On Feb. 19, catch "Rugrats—Pre-school Daze" at noon and "Dora the Explorer" at 12:30 p.m., followed by a "Dia-a-Thon" with "Caillou" at 1 p.m. and "Hey Arnold!" at 1:30 p.m.

Movies on TV

On HBO, today at 9 p.m., "War of the Worlds." Tomorrow at 7 p.m., "Back to the Future 3." Jan. 29 at 1:45 p.m., "Hudson Hawk." Jan. 30 at 9 p.m., "ED TV." Jan. 31 at 11 p.m., "The Rites With." Feb. 1 at 9 p.m., "Free Live." Feb. 2 at 9 p.m., "Kiss Frankie."

On Cinemax today at 8:30 a.m., "Catch-22." Tomorrow at 11:05 a.m., "The Spitfire Grill." Jan. 29 at 9 p.m., "Beyond Borders." Jan. 30 at 12 p.m., "Carlito's Way." Jan. 31 at 9 p.m., "The School of Rock." Feb. 1 at 6 a.m., "Bonnie and Clyde." Feb. 2 at 6:30 a.m., "All Quiet on the Western Front."

Roger Robinson

On Jan. 29 and 31, Roger Robinson of the UK-based performance poetry group Apples & Snakes will stage performing artists. Call the British Council at 914-138); to 14 ext. 120, or e-mail Susan.Arrogo@britishcouncil.org.ph.

Robinson's tour also includes a performance of "Sweet Talkers a Bite" at Conspiracy Garden Café on Jan. 30.

New haven for classic dishes

WORD OF MOUTH

Sandy Daza

I FIRST MET HARD BITES THROUGH CEL. Edelle dela Cerna. Our destination was a tiny eatery near the Cubao underpass.

Joseph and Jasmeah's answer surfaced as warmly, feisty dish I tried was not only delicious, it was quite inexpensive. The owners pamper regular celebrities, PBA players and the likes of the former PBA commissioner Jun Bernardino.

Two foodies

Commissioner Bernardino has treated us, and we had Mara. Recently, the two foodies decided to team up to review what could be the best inihaw sa pangs ng tuna and crispy lumpia in the metropolis. I dropped by Jasmeah's to visit friends and satisfy a craving.

Of course, I ordered pangs ng tuna, crispy lumpia and a few others. Wow! crispy lumpia, smooth but semi-soft in 1990s and serves with crispy pata sauce, it like eating a crispy pork pata. The best that it's fish makes it breakfast.

Notable

Many other notable gastronomic creations are continuing pass-by saging, sizzy pinoys, inasa sing, cordon rolled, and cuppa with other ng mga ng sauce. The dessert maker is delicious. I likewise enjoyed by swapping Adlao with glistening begwing. The mangoes are green, sour and crunchy and, when dipped in his homemade bagoong, is perfect with lechon.

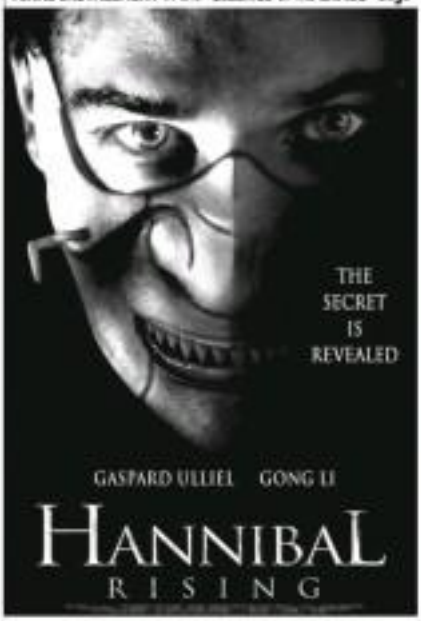
You'll find Jasmeah's on the second floor of the Pedro Station complex on G. Rimbaguy Usonas, Diego Silang, Tagaig City. Call 628-3064 or 828-151-4.

Happy eating!

E-mail sandydaza@yhoo.ca

NEXT ATTRACTION

From Bestselling Author THOMAS HARRIS comes the FINAL INSTALLMENT in the "SILENCE OF THE LAMBS" Saga



SHANG CINEPLEX

1 NIGHT AT THE MUSEUM 3 DEJA VU
2 BABEL 4 LITTLE CHILDREN
PREMIERE THEATER
Catch the Cineplex Special

GREENHILLS CINEMAS
THEATER NO. 1
1 DEJAVU 2 NIGHT AT THE MUSEUM
PROMENADE
3 LITTLE CHILDREN 4 BABEL 5 NIGHT AT THE MUSEUM

OPENS FEBRUARY 7
CHOW YUN FAT GONG LI
CURSE OF THE GOLDEN FLOWER

Feel the MAGIC at Eastwood City
featuring
Rivermaya
& Join the Club
January 27 / 8:00 PM
Eastwood Central Plaza
FREE ADMISSION
DELL Eastwood City

EASTWOOD CINEMAS
NIGHT AT THE MUSEUM
LITTLE CHILDREN
687-8963
GUARANTEED SEATS

ARANETA CENTER
Gateway MALL FarmersPlaza

exclusively at Gateway CINEPLEX 10
OPENS JAN 31

Gateway CINEPLEX 10
BABEL | MAGOR | AGENT 8-44
NIGHT AT THE MUSEUM | THE BLOOD DIAMOND | LITTLE CHILDREN
DEJAVU | DAY 5 | DEJAVU | NIGHT AT THE MUSEUM

MALL 5
1 AGENT 8-44 | NIGHT AT THE MUSEUM | 3 BABEL
2 DEJAVU | LITTLE CHILDREN | 4 MOVIE

Araneta Center
LUCKY FORTUNE PROMO
JAN 26 TO FEB 25